

**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:** - (1948)  
**Heft:** 1086  
  
**Artikel:** Maiden voyage of the M.V. "General Guisan"  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689191>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

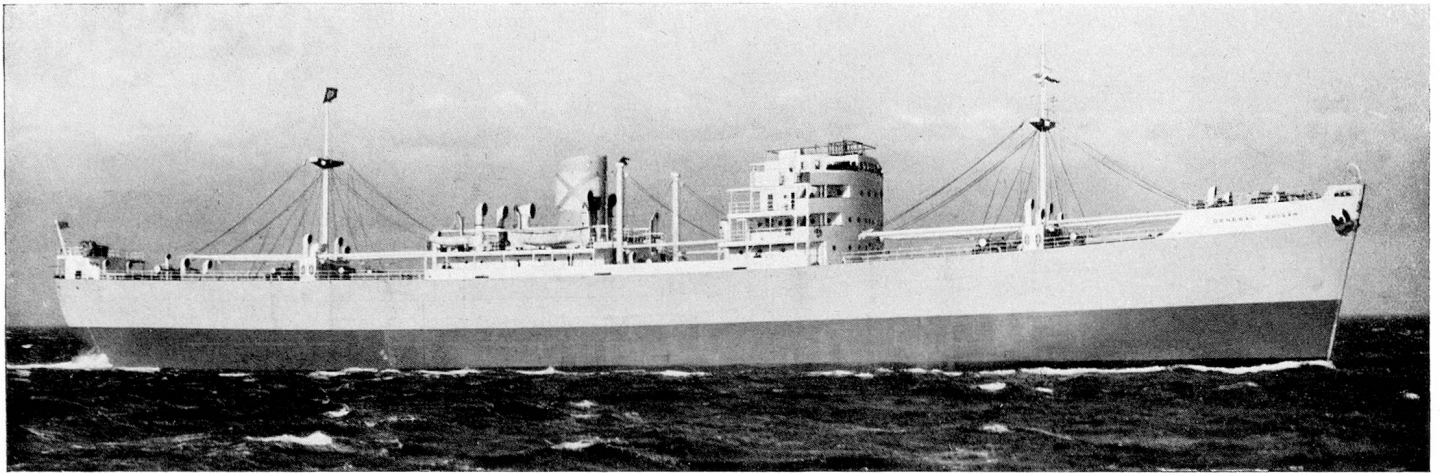
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 22.02.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**



M.V. "GENERAL GUISAN" LEAVING PORT.

## Maiden Voyage of the M.V. "General Guisan"

The M.V. "General Guisan" which was launched on the 19th of June, 1947, at the Dock Yards of Messrs. William Gray & Co., Ltd., at West Hartlepool, in the presence of General and Madame Guisan, the Swiss Minister and Madame P. Ruegger, members of the Swiss Press and a distinguished gathering of guests, has recently undertaken her maiden voyage.

Whilst this article is being written, this fine — and first ocean-going ship under Swiss ownership — is on her way, to the Argentine and on her return journey will carry a cargo of cereals for the Swiss Government.

We understand that this cargo will be discharged at the Port of Antwerp, and on the ship's arrival it will be accorded an official reception by members of the Swiss Colony in Belgium and a delegation from Switzerland.

It might be an opportune moment to refer to the history of the Swiss Mercantile Fleet, particulars which appeared in our issue of July 11th, 1947, (No. 1070).

The Swiss Fleet came into being during the war. Up to that time, Switzerland, without a seaboard, was chartering foreign vessels for its imports — an average of a million tons per annum from overseas. This was the case during the war 1914/18. It was hoped that it might still be possible to act likewise during the last war, especially in view of the time charter contract which was concluded sometime before the beginning of hostilities for 15 Greek tramps with an aggregate tonnage of about 120,000 tons which the belligerents agreed to allot to Switzerland with a guarantee of non-requisition.

As war operations developed, however, it was found necessary to create a small merchant fleet under the Swiss Flag which would secure more easily from the belligerents immunity at sea and access to the ports of discharge as such a fleet was entirely in Swiss hands and used exclusively for transport to and from Switzerland. A little later, other ships were added to this fleet for the transportation of food for the Red Cross which brought highly appreciated relief to all those — prisoners-of-war and others — who benefited from this humanitarian work.

Under the Convention of Barcelona of 1921, such countries without seaboard were allowed to carry out shipping business under their own flag. This enabled the Swiss Government to issue a decree on the 9th April, 1941, creating the Swiss Flag. Its essential provisions are in agreement with the usual maritime law. The Swiss Federal Council decreed that the various international conventions settling and unifying customs at sea, the work of minors, the repatriation of sailors, the contracts for the crews, etc., should be made compulsory for all vessels flying the Swiss Flag.

The port of registry for all Swiss ships is Basle. They are entered in the Register of Swiss Ships kept by the Office for Maritime Navigation in Basle, which superintends the whole of Swiss shipping.

With regard to the naming of the ship the firm of Messrs. André & Cie, Lausanne, the owners, initiated a prize-competition amongst their staff, the winner to be present at the launching of the ship. The suggestion of Monsieur Ruchat, Manager of their Paris Office, to give the vessel the name of "General Guisan," after the first soldier of our Army, was adopted.

The main particulars of the ship are: —

Length B.P. — 420 ft.

Breadth Moulded — 57 ft. 3½ ins.

Depth moulded to shelter deck — 37 ft.

and will carry 9,100 tons on a mean draft of about 25.1 ins.

The vessel has four holds and five hatches.

Two 10-ton derricks are fitted at No. 2 hatch and two 5-ton derricks at all other hatches. Three 5-ton and eight 3-ton electric winches are supplied by Messrs. Sunderland Forge & Engineering Co., Ltd. Special cargo space with separate hatch is provided.

Deep tanks are fitted forward of the machinery space and are constructed for the carriage of cargo, edible oil or water ballast.

Electric hydraulic steering gear with telemotor control and auxiliary hand gear are supplied by Messrs. Donkin & Co., Ltd., electric windlass by Messrs. Clarke Chapman & Co., Ltd., and automatic domestic refrigerating plant by Messrs. L. Sterne & Co., Ltd.

The captain, passengers, officers and engineers are accommodated in the bridge house. Chart room wheelhouse, radio room, pilot and radio operators' room are arranged on the navigating bridge, with captain's and officers' accommodation on the captain's bridge. Engineers' rooms are arranged on the shelter deck. Passenger accommodation for six passengers, complete with dining saloon and smoke room, is arranged on the lower bridge.

Petty officers, caterers and crew are accommodated on the shelter deck on either side of the machinery casing.

Mechanical ventilation and heating, fitted throughout accommodation, are supplied by Messrs. Norris Warming Co., Ltd.

Messrs. Sulzer Bros., Ltd., Winterthur, have supplied the main engine together with attendant auxiliaries. The engine is of Sulzer Marine Diesel Type 7 S.D.60, having 7 cylinders, 600 m.m. diameter by 1,040 m.m. stroke and developing 3,150 B.H.P. at 135 r.p.m. continuously.

Two 100 Kw. and one 25 Kw. generators are also supplied from Switzerland.

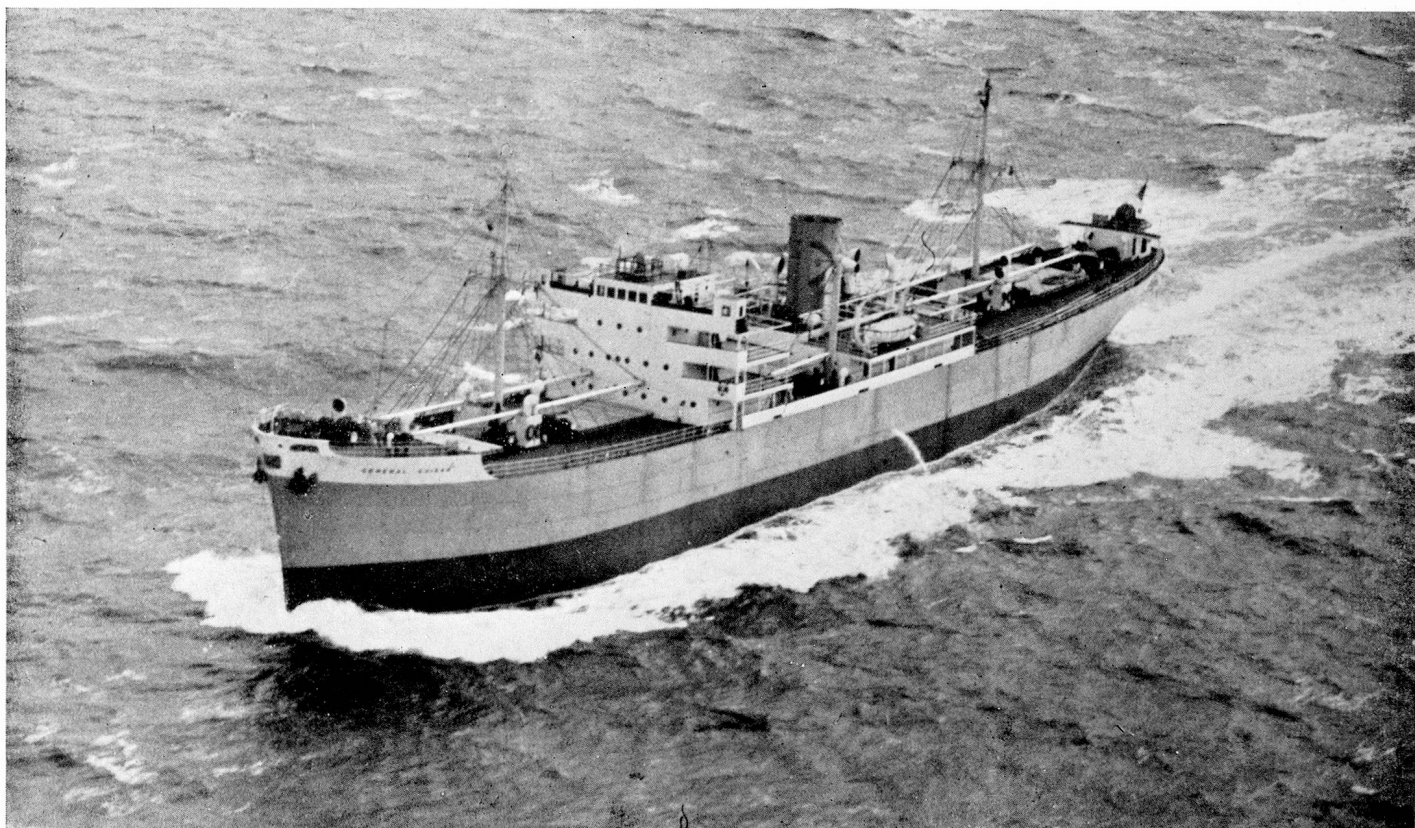
The immersion is 47.92 tons per in. at load draught and 41.68 per in. at light draught. Speed in service is 12 knots.

The crew of 34, so far, is principally Italian, but it is hoped that in future some of our countrymen, after receiving training, will be enrolled.

The appearance of the Swiss Flag on the high seas is an event of great significance, and should, once for all kill the joke about the "Swiss Navy."

We feel sure that our compatriots, both at home and abroad, will rejoice that our country has now joined the distinguished company of sea-faring nations.

ST.



M.V. "GENERAL GUISAN" SEEN FROM THE AIR.