

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: - (1950)

Heft: 1143

Rubrik: Personal

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SWISSAIR AND SWISS COMMERCIAL AVIATION IN 1950.

Swissair, the Swiss national air transport company will be twenty years old next year. Founded in 1931, after the merger of "Ad Astra" and "Balair" — the first having seen the light of day in 1919 in Zurich, the second in Basle in 1926 — it is no exaggeration to affirm that it can look back on 30 years experience in the domain of air transport.

In 1919 the first regular airmail service was started in Switzerland on the route Zurich — Berne — Lausanne — Geneva. Three years later "Ad Astra" inaugurated the first Swiss line to a foreign country: Geneva — Zurich — Nuremberg (Germany).

The birth of Swissair lent a fresh impetus to the Swiss commercial wings and carried their reputation of quality far and wide. Leading by the introduction in Europe in 1932 of the ultra-rapid American Lockheed Orion — thereby causing a real revolution in air transport — Swissair was almost one of the first European Airlines to put into service Douglas DC-2 and DC-3 aircraft.

The second world war interrupted the activities of the Company whose network extended first and foremost to foreign countries. After the Armistice in Europe, services on the old lines were resumed and the aircraft park enlarged by the purchase of four Douglas DC-4s, 6 Dakotas from American Army Surplus, converted into comfortable passenger aircraft, and 2 Douglas DC-3s.

By the end of 1948 Swissair had 16 aircraft for its services, two for freight transports and seven smaller or less modern ones for special and pleasure flights. Four "Convair Liners" were added to this list in 1949, bringing the number of line aircraft up to twenty.

This enlargement of the aircraft park was necessitated by the evolution of air transport during and after the war and by the operational programme which fore-saw a considerable extension of the network. So it came that from 1947 Swissair planes flew across oceans, deserts and jungles to reach the principal centres overseas. Regular services or special flights were organised to Cairo, Basra, Lydda, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Bombay and New York.

The Swissair network, which spanned 2,735 miles in 1931 and 2,801 in 1939, has grown to 7,858 miles in 1946 and reached 21,870 miles in 1949.

This year, in 1950, Swissair has decided to ensure a permanent regular link between Switzerland and the

United States. It has come to this decision after careful study of the problem as to whether such a connection satisfies the needs of the Swiss Confederation. To be able to maintain on this line the reputation which it has already acquired for its punctuality, the quality of its service and the valour of its crews, it has ordered two new Douglas DC-6B aircraft which will be put at the disposal of its numerous and faithful clientele next year.

To face developments it has not only been necessary to augment its staff — which has grown from 179 employees in August 1939 to more than 1,500 by the end of June 1950 — but also its financial means. From one million Swiss francs the capital has been increased to 20 million in 1947 with the participation of the Swiss Confederation, the cantons and other public corporations. In conformity with the Articles of Association 70% of the capital remain in the hands of private economy. The shares are owned by more than 2,600 shareholders who represent every region of Switzerland.

Despite the participation of the state Swissair is not nationalised. Managed on the basis of a private enterprise it is, however, supported by the government who considers it to be of national interest.

It is worth stressing that, although they form a relatively small park, the aircraft of Swissair have flown 5,347,483 miles in 1949, against 3,865,675 in 1948, and 2,549,955 in 1947. They are maintained and regularly overhauled with meticulous care by specially trained and qualified Swiss personnel and in accordance with the best tradition of quality which, for ages, has created a reputation for Swiss products abroad.

Before the war, and after its conclusion, Swissair has reached a very honourable place in the commercial aviation of the world. The conduct and behaviour of its crews, the regularity of its services — which attains more than 99% — have made it one of the most highly appreciated companies, a fact which is proved by the ever increasing number of passengers: 62,378 in 1946, 95,519 in 1947, 113,622 in 1948 and 153,812 in 1949.

PERSONAL.

We extend our heartiest congratulations to Mr. H. M. Ochsner on his appointment from July 1950, as Deputy Manager of the Overseas Branch of the Midland Bank Ltd.

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