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SWISSAIR AND SWISS CIVIL AVIATION 1950.

Next year Swissair, the national Swiss Air Transport Company, will look back on twenty years of existence. It was created in 1931 by the merger of the two companies "Ad Astra" (founded 1919 in Zurich) and "Balair" (founded 1925 in Basle). Swiss civil aviation, therefore is built up on rich experience, collected during three decades.

In 1919 regular air transports were for the first time carried out in Switzerland; these were mail services on the route Zurich—Berne—Lausanne—Geneva. Three years later already "Ad Astra" inaugurated its first service to a foreign country: Geneva—Zurich—Nuremberg.

The foundation of Swissair lent a new impetus to Swiss civil aviation. In 1932 it began operating — as the first company in Europe — fast American aircraft of the Lockheed-Orion type. The well-shaped red aircraft caused a great sensation, their cruising speed 160 miles per hour, about 60 miles more than was generally reached at that time. Also when it came to acquiring Douglas DC-2 and DC-3 aeroplanes, Swissair was one of the first European companies to do so.

However, the second world war almost completely paralysed its air services. Shortly after the war ended regular services could be resumed on various routes. The aeroplane park was supplemented by 4 new Douglas DC-4 and 2 new DC-3 machines. To these were added 6 Dakotas purchased from American Army Surplus and converted into comfortable passenger air liners. By the end of 1948 Swissair had 16 passenger aircraft, 2 freighters and 7 smaller or older types for various special purposes. Last year 4 Convair Liners were taken into service, whereby the number of passenger aircraft has risen to 20.

Post-war development of air traffic, as well as the proposed extension of the network, necessitated this increase in the number of machines. Since 1947 Swissair planes have crossed oceans, deserts and jungles and connected Switzerland direct with the most important centres of all Continents. Regular services and special flights have since then led to nearly all capitals of Europe, to Cairo, Basra, Lydda, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Bombay and New York.

In 1949 the network spanned 21,884 miles of unduplicated route, almost thrice that of 1946 and eight times as much as in 1939.

Mounting traffic necessitated also an increase in the staff. In August 1939 Swiss had 179 employees, by

the end of 1949 their number had risen to over 1,600. With the participation of the Swiss Confederation, cantons and communities the share capital was increased in 1947 from 1 million to 20 million francs. However, 30% only of the capital are in public hands. The company is run according to principles of private economy. Its 2,600 shareholders represent every part of the country.

In consideration of the relatively small number of aircraft achievements reached by Swissair are quite remarkable. 3,350,669 miles were flown in 1949, 3,867,979 in 1948 and 2,551,598 in 1947. All aircraft are serviced by first-rate trained personnel.

Thanks to its principle of high quality Swissair has gained for itself a position of repute in the world's air traffic. The performance of its flying personnel in bad weather and in winter has caused a great stir. In 1949 a regularity of 98,90% has been achieved. The national Swiss Air Transport Company enjoys, therefore, the greatest confidence, this is clearly proved by the ever increasing number of passengers: 62,378 persons travelled by Swissair in 1946, 95,519 in the following year, 113,622 in 1948 and finally 153,812 during the past year.

ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY.

An address was given at the Lecture Hall of the Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, Adelphi, on Tuesday, February 28th, by Mr. R. de Cintra, on "The Commercial Relations between the United Kingdom and Switzerland."

Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart Townend, O.B.E., M.A., was in the Chair.

The lecturer gave a very interesting *exposé* of an intricate subject, pointing out some of the rather amusing anomalies in Export and Import between the two countries. Mr. de Cintra was accorded a hearty vote of thanks on the conclusion of his very able and interesting address. The attendance, especially on the Swiss side, was not very prominent, which was, no doubt, due to the fact, that no less than four functions were fixed for that week, namely:—Monday: Annual Meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society; Tuesday: Anglo-Swiss Society; Wednesday: Opening of the Exhibition Mr. Weisbrod; Friday: Annual General Meeting and Dinner, Nouvelle Société Helvétique. Efforts should be made in future, that functions should be spread over, so as not to affect the attendance.

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