M/S "Lugano" at the Surrey Docks

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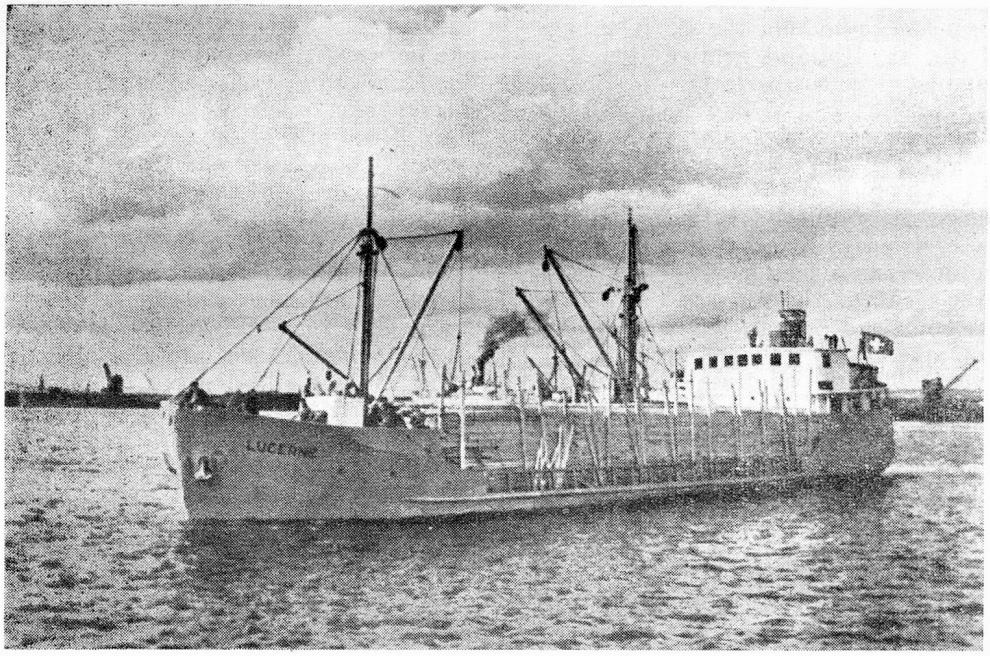

M/S " LUCERNE " SISTER SHIP OF M/S " LUGANO ".

My first acquaintance with the " Swiss Navy " was made in June, 1947, when I had the privilege of witnessing the launching, by Madame H. Guisan, of the M.V. " General Guisan " in the presence of a distinguished company, amongst them being the General himself and the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paul Ruegger, at the shipbuilding yards of Messrs. William Gray & Co., Ltd., at West Hartlepool. This fine vessel carrying 9,100 tons on a mean draft of about 25'1", belongs to the Suisse Atlantic, S.A., Lausanne.

A year later, on November 30th, 1948, my way took me again to the town of West Hartlepool, not far from the Scottish border, this time to attend the launching of M.V. " Carona ", a vessel carrying about 3,000 tons on a draft of 18'9" and built also by Messrs. William Gray & Co., Ltd., and owned by the Schweizerische Reederei, A.G., Basle. This equally fine vessel was launched by Madame Henry de Torrenté, the wife of the Swiss Minister in London, in the presence of the Swiss Minister and a large company of guests.

It might be an opportune moment to mention, that up to the middle of June, 1951, Swiss firms own 9 small coasting vessels, 1 coasting vessel 1,700 tdw., 15 ocean going vessels, 2 tankers 8 new vessels in the course of completion with a total tonnage of 193,780, which represents quite a respectable " Navy " for a small country like Switzerland, and the old joke of the " Swiss Navy " should now be buried for good and all.

* * *

On Thursday, January 17th, I once again had the thrilling experience of seeing the Swiss flag flying on a vessel, owned by the Trafina, A.G., of Basle, in which our friend Mr. Charles Strubin, who is well-known to the London Colony, is holding a leading position.

The name of the vessel was M/S " Lugano " and she is a sister ship of M/S " Lucerne " of which we reproduce a photograph, and which recently in the Bay of Biscay rescued nine men from the wrecked Norwegian Tanker " Oshhav "; this happened the very same week when the " Flying Enterprise " fought her last epic battle only a few hundred miles away.

To celebrate the arrival of the M/S " Lugano " at the Surrey Docks, Mr. Ch. Strubin invited a number of guests to a luncheon on board, and on arrival the party was received by the Master and his officers.

Previous to the Luncheon we were taken round on an inspection tour, whilst the unloading of timber from Gothenburg (Sweden) was in progress. The "Lugano" is, of course, a much smaller ship than the " General Guisan " or the " Carona ", and has a cargo of about 750 tons. Her crew consists of 11 Dutchmen, and she works mostly between England and Sweden.

Mr. Strubin told the writer, that after his long experience with deep sea tramp ships, he tried, when Switzerland began to create their own fleet, to design and have built a vessel which would be suitable for Rhine navigation as well as for the high seas, in other words a ship which could come down from the port of Basle into the North Sea and proceed to English or Scandinavian ports without transhipping its cargo.

However,according to him, this scheme proved not to be workable. owing to the fact that it is almost impossible to design a ship which is suitable for Rhine navigation and which at the same time, can stand up to the weather conditions at sea. After the last war, Mr. Strubin acquired two new Diesel motor ships of about 750 tons cargo capacity, with shallow draft, strongly built and able to carry a third of its cargo

on Deck. He employed these ships (M/S "Lucerne" and M/S "Lugano" carrying timber from Finland and Sweden to shallow ports in England and continental ports where larger vessels cannot enter.

On visiting the crew's accommodations we found them excellent. Each man has his own cabin with a proper bed and running hot and cold water. The M/S "Lugano" was built in Holland whilst the M/S "Lucerne" was completed in Norway.

Of the 34 ships under the Swiss flag there is only one Swiss Master and a few Swiss officers, quite a number of our compatriots serve as cooks, stewards and deckhands. It is hoped, that in time, the proportion of Swiss citizens will gradually increase, in fact, some of the larger vessels carry a few apprentices.

The inspection over, an excellent luncheon was served in the Master's cabin, the Master taking the Chair. The menu consisted of an elaborate hors d'œuvres, a dish of spaghetti, followed by "real" steak with various vegetables and as dessert a delicious fruit flan, with cream and coffee. Red and white wine was served *ad lib* and if this luncheon is any criterion of the crew's fare on board, then I think they have no reason to complain. The ship's cook, had certainly excelled himself and greatly added to the enjoyment of the visit.

To see this small vessel, proudly carrying the Swiss flag, amongst the many ships in the London Docks, was indeed a pleasant experience.

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CRONACA NOSTRANA.

I compatrioti d'italico idioma non avranno mancato di notare con viva soddisfazione, e magari con qualche granellino di fierezza in petto, i lusinghieri apprezzamenti a nostro riguardo pubblicati nell'ultimo numero dall'egregio collega *Helveticus*. Concediamo senz'altro che nel nostro caso sovente il cuore trascina la mente. Sappiamo invece che nei nostri concittadini d'Oltralpe questa tiene quello in una ferrea morsa e siamo pertanto sensibilissimi a chi di loro ci stima malgrado la nostra *diversità*. Altresì siamo loro grati per la prontezza con la quale indossano il grigioverde quando si tratta d'accorrere da noi (ben tre volte l'anno scorso!) a porre riparo ai colpi mancini menatici dalla Natura in rabbia. In fine non tralasciamo mai di deplorare come il nome di Berna, la signorile quanto vetusta Capitale federale, diventi spesso termine di biasimo nella nostra stampa quando dal disotto della famosa cupola ci giungano talvolta leggi o . . . tariffe ferroviarie non tenenti in giusto conto la nostra *diversità*.

Tale è il caso proprio in questi giorni; la stampa ticinese con severi editoriali e con tanto di statistiche alla mano insorge contro le *nuove tariffe ferroviarie* in vigore dal 1° gennaio scorso; si fa rilevare fra altro che, mentre al governo cantonale era stata fatta assicurazione che si trattava di una necessaria revisione e che l'aumento sarebbe stato in media del 5%, questo aumento, specie per i prodotti agricoli che il contadino ticinese può smerciare solamente oltre Gottardo, è in molti casi molto più forte, ad es.: una partita-vagone 2000 kg. da Bellinzona per Zurigo 48%, per S. Gallo 60%; partite isolate da 100 kg. da Bellinzona per Lucerna 32%, per Basilea 28% e così via.

Proprio in questo quarto d'ora difficile per l'agricoltura ticinese gli è venuto a mancare un valente paladino in seguito morte dell'ex-cons. di stato, *avv. dott. Angiolo Martignoni*, avvenuta a Lugano improvvisamente il 9 gennaio scorso, a soli 61 anni. Dopo gli studi liceali l'Estinto conseguiva a Berna la laurea in giurisprudenza, addottorandosi con una tesi sul patriziato ticinese. Nel 1919 iniziava la sua pratica forense e già nel 1926 entrava in Gran Consiglio. L'anno seguente veniva eletto consigliere di stato in

Nouvelle Société Helvétique
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OPEN MEETING

Tuesday, 19th February, 1952, 7 p.m

M. A. MASNATA, Lausanne,
Directeur de l'Office Suisse d'expansion commerciale
Privat-docent d'economie sociale à l'Université de Lausanne,

will speak in French on:
"L'HISTOIRE DES INDUSTRIES SUISSES"
followed by films,

at the
Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade,
opposite Baker Street Station, N.W.1.

All Swiss and Friends are heartily welcome.