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SWISSAIR INTRODUCES THE "METROPOLITAN"

On Tuesday, July 3rd, 1956, Swissair invited about a hundred guests including Diplomats, Members of the Press, Tourist and Travel Agencies, etc., to a Demonstration Flight in their new "Metropolitan" air liner at the London Air Port.

This flight brought back to me vivid and happy memories of two former *début* flights in which I was privileged to take part, namely the first flight of Swissair over London, — opening the London to Switzerland service, — on March 20th, 1935, and the first non-stop flight by Swissair from London to St. Moritz, landing at the airport of Semedan, on February 18th, 1938.

Looking back to former air travels with Douglas DC-2, DC-3 and DC-6B, comparing them with the latest addition to their airfleet, the "Metropolitan", one is struck by the considerable technical progress which has been achieved.

It has always been the policy of Swissair to operate the most modern aircraft on their rapidly extending network, and by introducing this "Metropolitan" they have fully lived up to their reputation. The "Metropolitan's" network includes Manchester, London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Frankfort, Dusseldorf, Paris, Vienna, Prague, Milan and Rome.

The DC-6B, which has been for some time in service on the long-distance routes, and on the London — Zurich "Super Swiss" service, and the Metropolitan, will be followed by still larger and faster planes, the DC-7C's ("Seven Seas"), and already orders are in hand for delivery in 1960, of the DC-8

pure jet liners, seating up to 140 passengers to fly non-stop from Switzerland to New York in less than eight hours. A most ambiguous programme indeed, which will put Swissair well on the map of all the big Airway companies.

How insignificant and ordinary nowadays a flight, say, to Zurich, Basle, Berne or Geneva has become, which only twenty-five years ago proved to many quite an event, when one realises that Swissair now operates regular services not only to all the important European cities, but has instituted transatlantic flights to U.S.A., South Africa, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, Beyrouth, Damascus, Cairo, Dakar, Recife, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

* * *

London Airport.

What a busy place this is? The sounds of roaring engines starting to take the machines to their "take off" positions, make it difficult to hear the announcements — over the loudspeakers — of the constant arrivals and departures of aircraft from and to all corners of the globe.

Smart air hostesses attired very attractively in the uniforms of their respective companies hustling and bustling around. Passengers ascending or descending the stairways of the airliners could be likened to a bee hive.

Amidst all this feverish activity, the first batch of passengers, numbering 44, mostly from the Press, were taken by coach to the corner of the airfield where the "Metropolitan" was ready for embarka-



THE "METROPOLITAN" AIRLINER.

tion, which took but little time, owing to the new technical feature of a built-in retractable stairway, which greatly obviates delays in embarking and disembarking.

On taking my seat, I noticed at once a number of improvements such as the folding table at the back of each seat, footrests which, when not in use, can be put out of the way, improved ventilation, built-in refrigerator in the kitchen, exhaust muffler which absorbs the greatest part of the engine noise.

The cabin (see illustration) which is pressurized has accommodation for 44 passengers. The crew numbers four, namely Pilot, 1st officer, and two stewardesses. Warm colours contribute to an atmosphere of calm and relaxation. The indirect lighting fixture, running the length of the ceiling in the middle is painted all white.



INTERIOR OF CABIN.

The flight then began, after a remarkably short run the wheels left the ground, and we were airborne. The "Metropolitan" circling over the airport speedily gained height. Through a microphone one of the stewardesses bade us welcome introducing the two captains, Bockhorn and Hürzeler, who were in command.

In the meantime weather conditions somewhat deteriorated, we encountered strong winds, but the machine travelled very smoothly, and not the slightest bumping was experienced. We followed the river Thames flying direct over the City as far as the Docks, where the many large and small vessels presented an interesting sight.

The return journey of the Demonstration flight, which lasted approximately half an hour, took us above the West-End. Many of the improvements in the cabin were explained to the passengers by the two pretty stewardesses in perfect English.

In the distance, the control tower of the London Airport could be seen, the engines began to slacken,

and within a few minutes we made a perfect and smooth landing. After a short interval the machine took on board another consignment, amongst them the Swiss Minister, Monsieur A. Daeniker, and Consul J. Huber. I understand that in the afternoon two more flights were made for journalists who had arrived from Switzerland.

The morning flights having been terminated, the visitors adjourned to the Airport Restaurant where a generous *apéritif* was offered, followed by luncheon, which included some of the vintage wines of our country.

When coffee was served, Mr. W. Wyler, the sympathetic General Manager of the London Office, extended a hearty welcome to the guests, especially mentioning the presence of H.E. the Swiss Minister, and Sir John D'Albiac, commandant of the London Airport.

He was followed by Mr. A. Baltenschweiler, Chief Engineer and Chief of the Planning Department of Swissair, who, on behalf of the central management, welcomed the company, saying that Swissair takes great pleasure in introducing the new "Metropolitan", explaining that eight units will be put into service on its European network in the course of this year, followed by three more next Spring, thus bringing the total up to eleven.

The speaker then recalled that Swissair was among the first carriers in Europe to buy the famous DC-2's and DC-3's. "According to the official IATA statistics of passengers carried", he continued, "Swissair ranks 18th among the more than 70 member companies.

Mr. Baltenschweiler drew the attention of his hearers to a number of improvements, some of which I have already mentioned. He specially pointed out the weather mapping radar, which enables the pilot to see ahead of his airplane, and by doing so can detect by day or night any thunderstorm area or zones of turbulence at a distance of up to 150 miles, thus permitting the pilot to see through even the thickest fog any obstacles that might be along the route.

Mention was also made of the beam coupler. "As you know", he said, "the airways are marked by radio ranges emitting signals into given directions, and thus forming an invisible path. The radio beam coupler receives these signals by way of the radio receiver and transmits them to the automatic pilot which makes the airplane ascend, descend, turn right or left. With this new navigational aid it is not only possible to fly the aircraft automatically but also to guide it automatically under whatever the weather conditions may be".

The last speaker was Sir John D'Albiac, commandant of the London Airport, who voiced his pleasure at having experienced the smooth running of this new machine. Amidst laughter he declared that the only snag was, that these machines were not of British make.

This very successful Demonstration Flight ceremony then came to its close, and we wish to thank the Management of Swissair, and especially the London General Manager, Mr. W. Wyler, who so efficiently arranged this event, for having given us an opportunity to make our acquaintance with this fine "Metropolitan" airliner.

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