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SWISSAIR FLIES OVER LONDON FOR THE FIRST TIME

March 20th, 1935

"Swissair" is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its foundation, and many will be the congratulations which this enterprising concern — having made an almost meteoric career — will receive, and we heartily join all those who are wishing them "many happy returns of the day!"

It is indeed a great event, and we deem it an appropriate moment to recall the day, some 21 years ago, when for the first time a Swissair liner circled over the Metropolis.

By courtesy of the Management, and under the guidance of Major Nabholz, the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, accompanied by Madame and Mlle. J. Paravicini, Monsieur Charles de Jenner, 1st Counsellor of Legation, Monsieur W. de Bourg, Counsellor of Legation (and afterwards Swiss Minister in Eire), and officials of the Imperial Airways and the Air Ministry boarded the first plane, a D.C.2 Douglas machine, for a 40 minutes flight.

On its return a second party consisting of members of the Swiss Colony, amongst them Dr. Rüfenacht and Mr. P. Hilfiker of the Swiss Legation, Mr. H. Senn and Mr. A. F. Suter, Presidents of the City Swiss Club and Nouvelle Société Helvétique respectively, Messrs. H. O. Ernst and E. Gassmann of the Swiss Federal Railways, Dr. E. Kessler, the London correspondent of the "Neuen Zürcher Zeitung" (and now Swiss Minister in Dublin), Dr. H. W. Egli, London correspondent of "Der Bund", and Mr. A. Stauffer, accompanied by Mrs. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", entered the plane for the second flight, which was described by the latter in our issue No. 700, of March 23rd, 1935, as follows:

* * *

"Hardly had we taken our seats when the roar of the engines could be dimly heard, and the machine taxied across the field to its "taking off" place. A short signal from the control tower, and the engines began to turn at top speed. After a short run the wheels, which I eagerly watched, left the ground, and circling over the airport we speedily gained height. Those of our friends whom we had left only a few minutes ago, suddenly began to look like little pin heads; higher and higher we climbed, the houses with their thousands and thousands of chimney stacks began to look smaller and smaller, the miles and miles of arterial roads could be clearly detected, and looked like big ribbons enveloping the open space. Little rivers and small lakes glittered in the sun like diamonds.

The first big landmark we spotted was the Crystal Palace, whose hundreds of window panes scintillated in the rays of the sun; suddenly through a slight mist we could see the river Thames appear with its graceful winding course, and the Houses of Parliament looking like a child's toy. We followed the

Thames as far as London Bridge. St. Paul's Cathedral, the Bank, various railway stations, and the Docks crowded with large and small vessels, were clearly discernable. In the distance one could see Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens appearing like small green patches, the Battersea Power Station with its large chimney stacks presented an imposing sight; as far as the eye could see nothing but houses upon houses presenting a rather drab appearance. A little tap on the back made me look round, it was the wireless operator who asked me to come into the pilot's cabin, the numerous instruments made a most impressive show, and many of their uses were explained to me. I was also informed that we were travelling at a speed of 185 m.p.h., at a height of 3,500 feet. I felt as if in a dream; what a wonderful job these pilots have — I thought on leaving the cabin — to glide through the ether, heavenwards far above the noise of a large city, unhampered by Belisha Beacons and Police traps in the glorious freedom of the air.

But there was no time for such reflections, already in the distance one could see the control tower of the Croydon airport, the engines began to slacken, and within a few minutes we landed again at the aerodrome after a flight which, alas, did not last long enough. It was certainly an experience which will leave behind vivid memories, and later we were royally entertained at the Air Port Restaurant.

The company was full of praise for what they had seen. For the Swissair Company, Major Nabholz, Messrs. Ch. Messmer, and Nicole are to be heartily congratulated on the efficient arrangements of this very interesting demonstration flight. Let us hope that it will be a good augury for the new service, which we trust will get the wholehearted support of our countrymen both here and at home."

* * *

Since then thousands of our compatriots, and other nationals have flown with Swissair on their many routes in perfect comfort and safety.

Amongst the many early pilots, who have piloted the Company's machines we would mention only a few such as Mittelholzer, Nyffenegger, Künzle, Zimmermann Ackermann, Heitmanek and Fretz, who have played a conspicuous part in the development of Swiss air travels. Many are the men, who by their foresight and initiative have rendered valuable services in administrative positions, some of whom are mentioned in another part of this issue.

In conclusion we wish to include in our congratulations the young, and most efficient General Manager of the London Office, Mr. W. Wyler, and his equally young and enthusiastic collaborators, who by their labour and courtesy have played no mean part in the success of Swissair.

ST.