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THE MOST POPULAR PIONEER IN SWISS AVIATION

The first to cross the Alps in an aircraft was the Peruvian Geo Chavez, who in his primitive plane flew from Brigue over the Simplon Pass (6,582 feet) to Domodossola, where he crashed and was killed in landing. That was in September 1910. On 8th December 1912, a young aviation enthusiast received the Swiss flying licence No. 32; his name was Oskar Bider. Soon after, Pilot Bider acquired his own Blériot single-decker aeroplane and on 24th January 1913 he flew, as the first man, from Pau (France) to Madrid (Spain), over the Pyrenees mountain range. In the same year Bider, only 22, made several first flights in Switzerland, such as the mail-carrying flight from Basle to Liestal; from Berne over the Wildstrubel peak (10,670 feet) to Sitten, and a climax, with his rather frail plane, right over the high alpine range, from Berne over the Jungfraujoch (11,340 feet) to Domodossola and on to Milan in four hours and forty minutes.

On 27th July he was successful in crossing the Alps for the first time in the opposite direction; having started in Milan, he crossed the Lukmanier and the "Chrützli" Pass, flew over the Lake of Lucerne and the Jura mountains to Basle. Bider was even able to do some impressive long distance flights, like the direct flight from Paris to Berne.

The following year, on 22nd April 1914, this fearless aviator made another pioneer flight by taking along a passenger for the first time over the Alps from Berne to Brigue. All this may sound today rather simple and short-range flying, but in those days it was real pioneering in aviation history. In 1919, Pilot Bider became the head of a committee to organize a Swiss society to promote flying.

The motor of Bider's single-decker Blériot plane, with which he made these historic flights, and his second plane (of the same type) are exhibited today in the Swiss Museum of Transport in Lucerne as a memento of this intrepid Swiss pioneer aviator.

During World War I, Oskar Bider served as chief flight instructor with the Swiss flying corps. He was killed on 7th July 1919, when he crashed during an aerobatics exhibition at the Dübendorf airfield near Zurich.

The golden jubilee of the first flight across the Alps was celebrated in various parts of Switzerland. Langenbruck, the place of origin of Oskar Bider, commemorated the feat by a special ceremony. Langenbruck is proud that he named his first aeroplane after the town and that he himself painted the Cantonal crest of Baselland on the steering gear. Although the commemoration ceremony in July was marked by nasty rain, a large crowd gathered to pay homage to the great aviator. There was a fly-past by a Hunter patrol and later a wreath was dropped from a double-decker plane near Oskar Bider's grave.

On the same day (13th July) a commemorative service was held in Berne. The Swiss Aero-Club had organised a special flying day incorporating a "Fliegerlandsgemeinde" at the end of which a new glider plane was christened. There were demonstrations by a balloon and a Hunter squadron of the Swiss Army and there were aerobatics and parachute jumping.

The sensational flight across the Alps of 1913 was also commemorated in Milan, where a "Metropolitan" of

Swissair landed with special guests. There was a banquet in honour of the Swiss visitors, at which the insignia of the "Ambrogino d'Oro" was presented to them. The flight was organised by the Swiss Foundation, "Pro Aero".

A mail flight for which a special edition of postage stamps was authorized was organised on 13th July 1963 for the route Langenbruck-Berne-Milan-Locarno.

(From S.N.T.O., A.T.S., "Basler Nachrichten".)

SULZER MACHINERY ON THE HIGH SEA

In the "Financial Times" and "Lloyds List" we read recently that the Shell Royal Dutch Group had ordered seven supertankers, two from a British shipbuilder, two from a German yard and three from three Dutch yards. The order for the two tankers to be built in this country, which is valued at £6m., has been placed with Joseph L. Thompson and Sons, of North Sands Shipbuilding Yard, Sunderland. Each tanker is about 63,000 tons and will be powered by a nine-cylinder Sulzer R.D. 90 engine of over 20,000 h.p. One engine will be supplied by Hawthorn Leslie (Engineers), of St. Peter's Works, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the other by Sulzer Brothers, of Winterthur, Switzerland. The vessels will be the largest tankers built so far for Shell, with navigating bridge and all accommodation fitted aft. They will have a service speed of 16 knots. Apart from the main engine, which is being built in Switzerland, certain auxiliary equipment for both vessels will also be manufactured on the Continent.

We learn from Sulzer Brothers that by now over 50% of all ships built in Great Britain have Sulzer machinery, a fact which is surprising.

From O.S.E.C., the Swiss Office for Expansion of Tourism and Trade, we have received the following news item referring to a big order for Sulzer Brothers.

A Liberian mining company has ordered three large stationary diesel engines from Sulzer Bros., Winterthur, for a new thermal power station. There engines are nine-cylinder units with a bore of 680 m.m. and rating of 11,450 h.p. each, at 150 r.p.m. They will thus be the highest powered diesel engines so far installed on the African continent. The complete power station, with an overall rating of 34,350 h.p. or 30,000 kVA, is to be put into operation at the end of next year. It is intended to extend this diesel power station at a later date and bring its output up to about 70,000 h.p., so that it will be the most powerful in the world.

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