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Swissair sticks to two-class flight

SWISSAIR has decided to keep to its two-class system and to give its high-quality economy class a different name - Swiss Class.

At the same time it intends to give special treatment to passengers travelling on full fares, including improved advance seat reservation and preferential check-in facilities at major airports.

In an in-depth study incorporating a broadly-based passenger survey and comparisons with other airlines, the advantages and disadvantages of the various class systems were thoroughly examined.

The decision to stay with the present arrangement reflects the conviction that a two-class product is still an inherently better solution than a three-class division. The latter would certainly generate extra short-term publicity, but inevitably would also have major drawbacks.

The main argument against a three-class system is that it hardly ever provides a tailored response to the fluctuating levels of demand in the individual tariff

categories. Demand varies not only from month to month and region to region, but also from flight to flight, and even on different legs of the same flight.

If it went for the three-class option, Swissair would therefore be unable to provide transport for thousands of passengers in the class of their choice. In particular, for full-fare passengers under the impression that the extra class was there to provide a clear separation from passengers on special holiday fares, that would be a highly disenchanting experience. And Swissair say they do not want to make any promises they cannot fully keep.

Added to these considerations is the response of the travelling public to Swissair's present policy. Up to now the relevant statistics do not indicate that any traffic is being lost to the intermediate classes of competitors.

Even so, Swissair is aware that

full-fare passengers have a right to expect something special in return for paying the normal tariff. From midsummer, therefore, Swissair plans to introduce for passengers paying full fare preferential check-in facilities at the first-class counters of airports in Switzerland and most of the countries served.

Special boarding cards will make sure that full-fare passengers can be identified as such at all times, enabling them to board the plane first, for instance, and receive some preferential

treatment on board.

It is additionally planned to make further improvements in the advance seat reservation facilities. All these extras are offered without additional charge.

Swissair is convinced that the distinctive standards of service and comfort in its second class are no longer commensurate with the devalued "economy" label. It has therefore decided to change this to "Swiss Class", a designation that better reflects the quality product enjoyed by passengers in this category.

Profits are down

IN 1982 Swissair made a net profit of Sfr. 38.5 million (£10.9 million) compared with Sfr. 54.3 million (£13.7 million) in 1981.

Total revenue rose to Sfr. 3,540 million (£1,000 million) from Sfr. 3,390 million (£854 million) the year before. Expenditure before depreciations went up to Sfr. 3,283 million (£927 million) from Sfr. 3,130 million (£788.4 million). As a result, the gross profit amounted to Sfr. 257.5 million (£72.7 million), against Sfr. 262 million (£66 million) in 1981.

Ordinary depreciations accounted for Sfr. 219 million (£61.8 million), leaving a net

profit of Sfr. 38.5 million. In 1981 ordinary and supplementary depreciations totalled Sfr. 208 million (£52.3 million).

Together with the profit balance brought forward from the previous year, Sfr. 42.6 million was at the disposal of the annual general meeting held in Zurich on April 29.

The board recommended the distribution of a gross dividend of Sfr. 25 per share (Sfr. 35 per share for 1981), and the appropriation of Sfr. 4.1 million to statutory reserves and Sfr. 1 million to personnel welfare institutions, with the balance of Sfr. 3.6 million to be carried forward.

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ECONOMIC WORLD

SUBSTANTIAL reductions in international phone charges are to be expected in the course of this decade, according to Mr Richard Butler, new secretary general of the Geneva-based International Telecommunication Union.

He said cost units for many international calls have been reduced considerably since 1970 and are continuing to go down, as a result partly of countries sharing resources in remote areas and common use of communications satellites.

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At a reception at London's Portman Hotel, Louis Nart introduced August Weber, his successor as Swissair's general manager for the UK and Ireland, to prominent members of the Swiss community. Seen here are (left to right) R. Amstad, of Swiss Bank Corporation; Mrs Amstad; L. Nart; Mrs E. Tangemann; M.A. Keller, Swissair's regional manager Western Europe; Mrs L. Nart; A. Weber; Mrs A. Weber; and E. Tangemann, Union Bank of Switzerland.

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