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A gauche: Un Curtiss-«Commando» à Genève-Cointrin. — Links: Eine Curtiss-«Commando» in Genf-Cointrin.

SWISS AIRPORTS IN THE WORLD AIRLINE NETWORK



Once the modern airplane has taken to its natural element, it is capable, with the help of a considerable number of technical aids and accessories, of reaching its destination with astonishing reliability and punctuality even under adverse weather conditions. The critical phases are really confined to taking off and landing, that is to say to the short period of transition from earth to space and vice versa. And it is precisely for this reason that the ground organisation and the lay-out of aerodromes are of such decisive importance for the trouble-free and punctual operation of air traffic.

Of all Swiss towns Geneva is in an enviable position, as it possesses in the airport of Cointrin, only some two and a half miles from its central railway station, an "air base" which presents very favourable conditions from the point of view of aviation technique. Sheltered by the Jura, its wind streams are highly regular and run in most cases parallel to the mountain ranges of the Jura and Salève. By virtue of this rare absence of obstacles one single runway is quite sufficient. As far back as the early years of the war a concrete strip measuring some 1300 yards in length and 55 yards wide was laid, and in the summer of 1946 lengthened to 2200 yards. A building some 260 yards in frontage length is already nearing completion and the hangars will be able to accommodate between eight and ten four-engined planes.

For the large and heavy type of machine, covering something like 350-500 feet per second, the manoeuvring space at Dübendorf between the Wangerberg and the Zürichberg has become too restricted. That is why the Canton of Zurich has been obliged to build an entirely new airport on the site at Kloten formerly used as a military training and firing ground. This meets most admirably all requirements made of an international airport. Within a relatively short space of time a three-runway system, adapted to the latest international standards, was planned and executed. On June 14th 1948 it was possible to inaugurate the western runway, measuring approx. 2090 yards in length and 66 yards in width, which represents, as it were, the main artery of this giant "air station". Barely five months later the blind-landing strip, equipped with the most up-to-date night illumination facilities and measuring 2860 by 83 yards, was ready for service. Both these runways can take planes weighing anything up to 135 tons.

It is likewise planned to extend, in Franco-Swiss collaboration, the modern airport of Basle-Mühlhausen at Blotzheim, which has already proved time and again its topographical and climatic advantages as an alternative or emergency aerodrome. Parallel to the existing "steel mattress" runway 1650 yards in length, a concrete strip measuring 2200 yards by 66 for wheel loads up to 45 tons will be laid as a blind-landing runways. There will also be a cross-runway, its length being temporarily fixed at exactly one mile.

With her airports of Zurich-Kloten, Geneva-Cointrin and Basle-Mühlhausen, Switzerland has at her disposal not only three bases in the world-wide "ocean of the air", but also furnishes, by virtue of her up-to-date and admirably conducted ground organisations, a not inconsiderable contribution towards enhancing the safety of international air travel.

A gauche, au milieu et en bas: Le contrôle des moteurs et l'approvisionnement d'essence au cours d'une escale. — Links, Mitte und unten: Motorenkontrolle und Treibstoffergänzung anlässlich einer Zwischenlandung.