

Swissair news : new head office building at Balsberg

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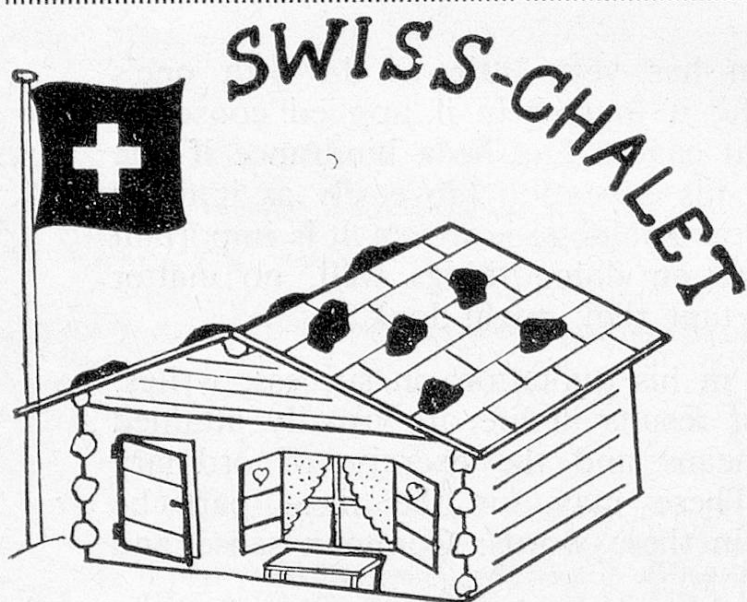
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Swissair News

NEW HEAD OFFICE BUILDING AT BALSBERG

Background and Planning

In line with the extraordinary growth of air transport since the end of the Second World War, Swissair has constantly had to adapt its organisation to new requirements. Together with the steady build-up of the aircraft fleet and the network went an increase in staff, which in turn brought about a need for more space. The accommodation available in the former Head Office building at Hirschengraben in the centre of Zurich proved inadequate as early as 1954-55. Subsequently more and more sections had to be housed elsewhere; this enforced decentralisation finally had the result that in 1958-59, the company was renting more than twenty different premises in Zurich itself, at Oerlikon and at Kloten. Since offices with similar tasks could not always be located together and organised as a single unit, working processes were slowed down or made less efficient. For economic and organisational reasons Swissair had since 1956-57 been looking for a suitable site for a new Head Office building in the vicinity of Zurich Airport. An advantageous site of 57,000 sq. metres and favourable accessibility was found on the south-west spur of the Balsberg, bordering the national highway



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N 1b (Zurich Airport), the Schaffhausen road (Glattbrugg-Kloten) and the railway line Zurich-Kloten. In June 1961, the Swissair management commissioned the contractors Karl Steiner (Zurich) to prepare the designs.

So as to establish the size of the facilities needed the company first analysed its own working system. For this purpose the entire administration was broken down into very small units or operating sections and these were then assembled into large operating units according to their dependence upon one another. The location of these units in the new building in relation to each other was governed by their common working interests, the intensity of flow and turnover of goods, equipment requirements, the volume and nature of external visitors and the company's management structure.

Extrapolating statistics covering past developments and allowing for further rationalisation, the likely personnel strength was established for 1970 and plans were based on the corresponding space requirements for staff and equipment. The results of both sets of calculations were compared and correlated. Starting with a personnel strength of 1,650 in the Head Office building in 1970 and based on the space requirements of the various sections and the room needed for machinery, operating equipment, records, stores garages, foods handling, conference and interview rooms, the resulting requirement for office space was about 16,000 sq. metres and for equipment about 5,600 sq. metres.

Provision was also made for a staff restaurant where 1,200 persons could take their meals based on self-service, but incorporating a waitress-service section up to a maximum of 10%. The plans further comprised parking space for 670 vehicles, corresponding to 45% of all employees present at any one time using their own transport. Finally, allowance had also to be made for air raid shelters.

Expansion in air transport is not going to stop in 1970 and plans for considerable extension opportunities were therefore incorporated from the start. The designs provide for the possible enlargement of office space by half to about 2,500 working places without major disruptions. More car parking space and larger kitchens for the staff restaurant can also be provided.

The advance design with approximate cost estimates was approved by Swissair's Board of Directors in July 1962. Plans were submitted for local authority approval in April 1963, completing the design stage. Approval was granted in December of the same year. The first premises were occupied in September 1966; the move into the new building was complete on 20th February 1967, uniting Swissair's administrative headquarters under one roof for the first time since 1947.

The Building

The new Swiss Headquarters has cost 47 million Swiss francs. The main building comprises a lower ground floor, lower and upper terrace floors, ground floor and three upper storeys. In addition there are a connecting tract, the restaurant building, including the heating and air conditioning plant. All sections using heavy equipment and handling goods in volume are housed on the three lower floors. The main office block, measuring 79.20 metres x 64.80 metres, stands on the upper terrace floor and encloses a courtyard 36 metres square. Four intersections connect the office block with the terrace floor. A two-storey connecting tract, 64.80 metres long, links the administration building with the restaurant block which measures 57.60 x 43.20 metres.

The main entrance opens into a spacious entrance hall from which two sets of lifts and staircases lead to the three upper floors and the upper terrace floor. All floors can also be reached from the car park on the lower ground floor via two more lifts and stairs.

The offices are subdivided partly by light structural walls partly by prefabricated moveable wooden partitions.

Conventional air conditioning has been installed to maintain the required temperatures, especially to eliminate excess heat in the reservations rooms. The building also has oil-fired central heating.

For organisational and constructional reasons the small working units are located around the courtyard and the open-plan, medium-sized offices around the outside.

The staff dining room seats 420. In addition there is an executive restaurant seating 50 and catering also for visitors.

Each floor has a rest room in which staff can take refreshments twice daily during breaks.

—The Swiss Observer

News of the Colony

AUCKLAND SWISS CLUB

The Auckland Swiss Club held a Fastnacht on 9th September 1967 and what an evening it turned out to be! The hall was beautifully decorated with native bush and coloured lights, making it look like part of an exotic island. A great number of people had gone to a lot of trouble, making up very attractive and original costumes. There was a "Swiss-negro," whose costume consisted mainly of shoe polish and a grass skirt. One of our fore-forefathers, also a native of the jungle, kept him company.