

Swissair - a story of success

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SWISSAIR—A STORY OF SUCCESS

In March 1956, Swissair, the national air line of Switzerland, celebrated the 25th anniversary of its foundation, an event which was duly recorded in the "Swiss Observer". Much of what has been achieved in the last twenty-seven years has been from time to time told in the pages of this journal. We recall here a few data in the early history of Swiss aeronautics.

The first Swiss aero company was founded in Zurich in May 1919 by the late Walter Mittelholzer and Alfred Comte. Soon afterwards the Ad Astra was founded, and a fusion with a local flying concern in Geneva enabled the company to operate over the whole of Switzerland. As time went on, it became evident that under prevailing conditions private concerns could not possibly organise an efficient service of air transport, so that after a bare two years of activity the enterprise was to a great extent closed down, i.e. reduced to a minimum.

It was only in the year 1922 that the Federal authorities and the towns and cantons directly interested in the service agreed to give their support, in the form of some slight financial backing for the organisation of regular air traffic. In June 1922, therefore, Ad Astra was reorganised and resumed its

service with the most up-to-date machines then available.

The year 1926 saw the establishment of a second Swiss air traffic concern, Balair (Basle Air Traffic Company). At last the Federal authorities proved more amenable; they supported the new rapidly developing Swiss air traffic with increased subsidies, and within a few years this new means of transport had advanced by leaps and bounds.

Three years later, in 1931, Ad Astra Aero amalgamated with Balair to form the company which we know to-day as Swissair. This fusion promoted to a very great extent the subsequent development of Swiss civil aviation in its political, technical and commercial aspects.

In 1932 Swissair acquired two American Lockheed Orion high-speed machines. In 1935 it replaced its entire fleet with the latest high-speed machines, the Douglas DC-2, and two years later the Swissair fleet was again enlarged with machines of the Douglas DC-3 type. From then onwards followed at short intervals the DC-4, DC-6bs, and DC-7c, and in 1960 the Douglas DC-8 jet liner will be put into service.



View of the entrance and reception hall of Swissair's new administrative offices in London.



Mr. W. Wyler, Swissair's General Manager for the U. K. and Ireland, in his new office.



Mr. M. A. Keller, Sales Manager for the U.K. and Ireland.

One of the most outstanding events in the history of Swissair was when in April 1957 the company became a world carrier in the true sense of the word, with a network circling the globe from North and South America across Europe and the Levant to the Far East.

This rapid extension brought with it many changes also in the administration, necessitating new and enlarged offices. For some time the need was felt to extend the Swissair London Offices, and recently the company have taken over new spacious administrative offices at 54-62 Regent Street, near Piccadilly Circus, in the building previously occupied by Oddenino's Hotel.

By courtesy of the Management we have been afforded an opportunity of inspecting these new quarters, and we have much pleasure in publishing a number of photographs of some of these most up-to-date offices. They house the airline's Management for the U.K. and Ireland and the sales, freight correspondence, distribution, accounts and public relations departments. The ticket office, reservation department and tariffs office remain at 126 Regent Street, where they have been since 1951.

The new offices occupy the whole of the second floor with an area of over 5,000 square feet. They have been tastefully decorated and furnished in contemporary style. The designs were prepared by Swissair's architect, Mr. A. Proserpi, of Zurich, and executed by Messrs. A. Bell & Son (Paddington) Ltd. A new colourful series of posters, advertising Swissair's world-wide services, have been used with outstanding effect as part of the wall decorations.

Facing the glass doors to the front reception hall is a Swissair sign in red and white perspex three feet in diameter. A receptionist deals with visitors' enquiries and is also responsible for the modern automatic telephone exchange. The main offices have sound-proofed ceilings and recessed flush daylight lighting.

At the same time the reservation department at 126 Regent Street has been considerably enlarged and modernised. A new feature is a large destinations board showing seat availability over the Swissair network.

It is expected that Swissair's new office facilities in London will be adequate for a number of years to come in dealing with the company's constantly expanding traffic.



Swissair's London reservations department has been considerably enlarged by the addition of space previously occupied by administrative offices. It is pictured here during a busy morning period; nearest the destinations board are, left to right, Mr. E. Burgaezzi (Traffic and Reservations Manager), Mr. P. Nutt (Assistant Reservations Manager) and Mr. J. E. Harper (in charge of offline and long-distance bookings).