

Swissair helps shape history ... and keeps abreast of today

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SWISSAIR helps shape history

The world's only remaining Lockheed-Orion in the Swiss Transport Museum.

In 1932 Swissair was just one year old when, as the first European airline, it started to operate two single-engined Lockheed-Orion speed-planes. This type of U.S.-built aircraft and its series of record flights caused a sensation on the old continent.

When Walter Mittelholzer, then Swissair's director and chief pilot, completed a Zürich - Tunis - Rome - Zürich round-trip over 2,600 km in eight and a half hours it was thought to be the nec plus ultra. As a great novelty the plane, whose fuselage was made of wood, had a retractable undercarriage. Apart from the pilot, it accommodated four passengers as well as freight and mail.

Rarity value

Lockheed built a total of 35 Orions in different versions. Today, there is only one left - as an exhibition piece in the Swiss Transport Museum in Lucerne. But before it came to its final resting place, a group of retired Swissair engineers and mechanics, known as the Fokker Team because they had previously restored a Fokker plane for the museum, had it repaired and completely overhauled, including the Wright-Cyclone engine which was restored to operational condition.

However, the Lockheed-Orion will never again take to the air as the risks involved and its rarity value are too high.

The one-engined Lockheed-Orion

could develop a cruising speed of some 270 km/h and was thus a good 100 km/h faster than any other plane in use in Europe at the beginning of the thirties. Its maximum speed was 360 km/h, and the maximum height it could climb up to was 5,100 metres.

"Red Dog"

The passengers fell in love with the new transport in the red paint coat - hence its sobriquet "Red Dog". Swissair operated the plane for an Express Service from Zürich via Munich to Vienna. Demand for seats skyrocketed and when a small surcharge was levied for the extra speed and comfort, passengers didn't as much as blink an eye.

The seat load factor averaged an undreamed of 82%. Although flights could only take place in daytime during the summer and in relatively good weather conditions - the aircraft had no radio - a mere 5% of the scheduled services were either delayed or cancelled.

Disadvantage

The Lockheed-Orions had, however, one disadvantage - they quickly became too small. So Swissair sold them in 1936 to a party in Paris and from there they somehow found their way to Spain where they saw action in the Spanish civil war.

The Lockheed-Orion now exhibited in the Swiss Transport Museum had hardly less ups and downs in its own

time. Originally type-designated Altair and having been used to carry mail, it was modified and renamed Orion in 1932; it was the only one fitted out with a metal body.

Records

This Orion, under the name of "Shelllightning", made the headlines due to a number of spectacular record flights. Its pilot was none other than James H. Doolittle who later became famous - and a three-star general in USAF - for his aviatory exploits. Incidentally, Doolittle was the first test pilot with an MIT degree in aeronautical sciences.

Stunts

The Lockheed-Orion starred in several Hollywood movies with a stunt flyer at its controls. It also participated in several air races. Finally, it ended up as an open air museum piece and gradually lost its airworthiness.

In good hands

Legal controversies over ownership followed but came to an end when the director of the Swiss Transport Museum, Alfred Waldis, decided to buy the aircraft. It is now in good hands and in very pleasant company - delighting experts and laymen alike as it stands between a historic Fokker F-VIIa and a good old DC-3.

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Apart from being quite the most beautiful hotel in London, the Inn on the Park is also quite the most perfect rendezvous. It's the place to meet after dark, after theatre, after a hard day's work, after anything. It also lets you start any evening as you mean to go on. In style.

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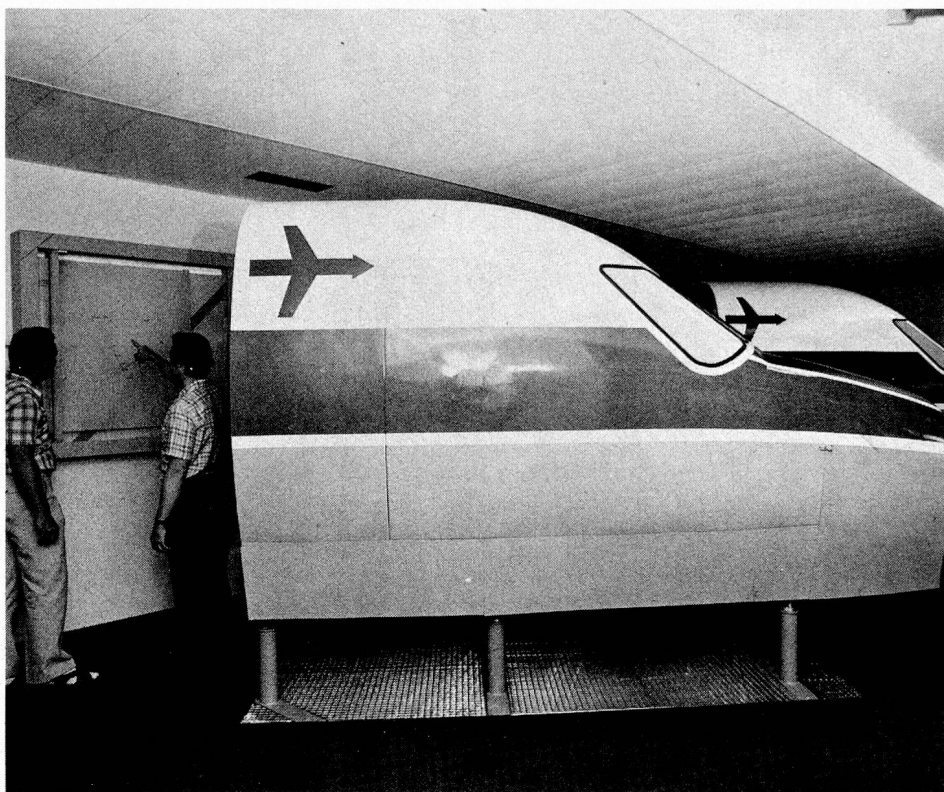
Pilot training now goes electronic: the cockpit as well as special machines which record the flight paths for later instructional assessments are linked to a computer which stores entire blocks of 150 different navigational aids. The new equipment necessitated a total investment of 1.5 million Swiss francs. Some of its capacity will be sold to private pilots.

It may be noteworthy that Swissair is doing its own programming and also takes care of the computer maintenance so that the entire operation can optimally be adapted to the requirements of the Civil Aviation School.

The Swiss Civil Aviation School, an establishment financed by the Federal government but by its commission operated by Swissair, will soon end its Link Trainer era which had commenced in 1958 when five "Links" were bought.

Two up-to-date electronic Flight Trainers manufactured by Atkins & Merrill in the U.S.A. are now in place and will allow a basic training for instrument flying on a much larger scale. In the new Trainers the trainee will no longer "fly" solo but have an instructor beside him who can, if need be, take corrective action. A third seat may be occupied by an aspirant pilot in an "observer's" role.

In contrast to the Link Trainers, the new equipment performs no movement and is yet providing more "reality" in as much as the steering column is hooked to a hydraulic system, engine and touch-down (tyre) noises are simulated, and the instrumentation is very elaborate inclusive of a fully automatic Instrument Landing System (ILS). The instructor can



The two Flight Trainers of the Swiss Civil Aviation School operated by Swissair. On the left, one of the recorders that print out the flight paths for later critical appraisal.

cause a variety of troubles such as varying wind conditions on different flight levels.

Whereas with the Link Trainers it had been the main objective to teach instrument flying and radio communications, the new Trainers permit a better

flight procedure instruction. The instruments react like those in a twin-engine Piper Aztek. Thus, the would-be pilots are able to gather knowledge and collect experience which otherwise could only be gained in airborne craft.

CIBA-GEIGY'S first half year

During the first half of 1978, Ciba-Geigy Group sales amounted to 5,000 million Swiss francs, a reduction of 669 million francs or 12% on the figure for the corresponding period of 1977. Currency fluctuations have impaired Group sales growth expressed in Swiss francs to an unprecedented degree, namely some 1,000 million Swiss francs or 20% as against the first half of 1977.

Sales in relation to the corresponding period of 1977 varied from one operating sector to another. While the Dyestuffs and Chemicals Division is still feeling the effects of the slack state of

business in its customer industries, the Plastics and Additives Division has been able to maintain its market position in all essentials.

Growth in the Pharmaceuticals Division was up to expectations in terms of local currencies. The Ilford and Airwick Groups succeeded in surpassing, by a considerable margin, their local currency performance in the first half of 1977. The picture presented by the Agrochemicals Division was markedly affected by bad weather, especially in North America, and a significant fall in sales was recorded.

DIESEL CARS NOT POPULAR

Diesel-driven cars do not seem to be very popular in Switzerland. According to the statistics for the number of motor vehicles in Switzerland in 1977, fewer than 4,000 private cars on the roads had diesel engines. On the other hand, there are 1.93 million petrol-driven cars. This

lack of popularity on the part of diesel engines in Switzerland, compared with other European countries, is due to the very slight difference in price between diesel oil and petrol, as well as to the high price of diesel-driven cars.

CULTURAL LIFE

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LIONEL ROGG was born in Geneva in 1936. His course at the local Conservatoire included organ study with Pierre Segond and piano with Nikita Magaloff. In 1956 he won a first prize — with distinction — in organ, and in 1957 a first prize in piano. In 1961 he performed the complete organ works of Bach in ten very successful recitals given at the Victoria Hall in Geneva, and since then he has given recitals in almost every country in Europe. In 1965 he made his first visit to the United States and Canada, and has returned each year to give concert tours or master classes. Lionel Rogg is professor of organ and counterpoint at the Geneva Conservatoire.

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