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Evenings at half price

SWISS Federal Railways (SBB) have introduced half-fare evening tickets in 12 regions of the country in a revolutionary scheme believed to be the first of its kind in Europe.

For a one-year trial period the tickets will be valid for travel from 6pm from stations along certain routes for a distance of 36 kilometres.

The SBB says the idea is to make the railway more attractive for "evenings out" and also to improve passenger figures on evening services.

It is also hoped that the plan will encourage people to visit urban centres by rail for evening entertainment and relieve car parking problems in city centres.

Swissair satisfied

SWISSAIR'S net profit of Sfr. 38.5 million last year – a drop of 29 per cent over the previous year's figure – must be regarded as satisfactory, says the airline's chairman Armin Baltensweiler.

He told the annual Swissair press conference that despite business turnaround and unfavourable exchange rate developments, the Swissair group increased annual turnover, which topped the Sfr. 3.5 billion level for the first time.

But about Sfr. 33 million of the net profit was from book profits connected with the sale of aircraft and spares.

Airline operations, which bring in about 80 per cent of total revenue, made a substantial loss for the third year running.

Capacity increased by 4.8 per cent but demand rose only by 1.8 per cent. The production increase was due to the fleet renewal programme and in a period of transition the unexpected standstill in traffic growth had a more severe

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impact than anticipated.

Company president Robert Staubli said the airline was budgeting for a four per cent growth this year and for only a marginal improvement in the operating result. Early indications were that 1983 traffic would exceed expectations.

The Swissair Board is recommending a dividend of Sfr. 25 per share compared with Sfr. 35 in the previous year.

Fair set for record

EARLY applications for this year's International Travel Trade Workshop (TTW) in the Swiss lakeside resort of Montreux indicate that it will again attract record numbers of exhibitors and visitors.

TTW director Pierre Kundert says demand is heavy from regular exhibitors and also from newcomers wanting to book space.

As a result, the exhibition area at Montreux's Congress Centre where the event will be held for the eighth time, from November 1-3, is to be increased and the layout is also to be improved.

Zurich drops 2%

ZURICH had nearly two per cent less tourist traffic last year but the drop was less than half the average for Switzerland as a whole.

There was a decrease in visitors from other parts of Switzerland and from Japan, although the Zurich Tourist Office carried out its biggest single promotional campaign there in 1979.

Visitors from the US rose by more than 20 per cent and more people also went to Zurich from Israel, Canada and Brazil.

Quicker by train – SBB

SWISS Federal Railways (SBB) say businessmen give too little attention to price, journey time and comfort comparisons between different forms of transport.

Following a survey covering 40 Swiss firms, the SBB has produced a booklet giving information about calculating travel costs and advice on choosing the optimum method.

It says that Sfr. 1,600 million is spent annually in Switzerland on business travel. The booklet claims that rail travel is frequently quicker – or at least as quick – as using a private car and is often cheaper.

The SBB adds that rail is competitive with air travel in time as well as price, particularly for journeys of between 200 and 500 kilometres.

Ballot box battle

PLANS to extend Belp airport, which serves Berne, are likely to be challenged in a referendum.

The immediate reason for the referendum will be objections to the Berne cantonal parliament's decision to grant just under Sfr. 9 million for the improvements.

The money is intended for a so-called "mini-project," which involves lengthening the runway by 600 metres to 1,900 metres and installing an instrument landing system.

If opponents of the scheme can collect 5,000 signatures – as seems certain – there will have to be a referendum in which the canton's voters can have the final say on the money grant and, indirectly, on whether they want the airport extended.

The mini-project was drawn up after the cantonal authorities ruled against a larger scheme,



mainly on the grounds of noise and prejudice to the quality of life in the surrounding area.

A main user of the airport is British airline Dan-Air, which operates a direct daily London-Berne service and recently celebrated its 10th anniversary on this increasingly popular route.

Massive tax bill looms

THE Lugano-based travel company of Globus Gateway Tours, which is linked with British interests, is to pay the Swiss authorities Sfr. 31 million in outstanding taxes and fines.

The Ticino Cantonal authorities emphasised that there was no question of any charges of tax fraud being brought against the company.

The Swiss authorities make a distinction between tax evasion – not declaring income or assets – and tax fraud, which would involve falsifying books or documents with intent to deceive the authorities.

In evasion cases the authorities can impose fines based on the amount of tax outstanding.

The Cantonal authorities said they were not allowed by law to reveal more details of the case.

But it is known that Globus Gateway Tours, part of an international group which includes

Cosmos in the UK and Gateway Tours in the US, has been the subject of investigations since last year.

The company employs 130 people in Lugano and is mainly concerned with incoming holidaymakers taking coach tours in Switzerland and other European countries.

It is believed that the allegedly unpaid taxes mostly related not to Globus Gateway itself but to services which the company performs for other firms in the group which have no registered offices in Switzerland.

'Ruinous' rivalry

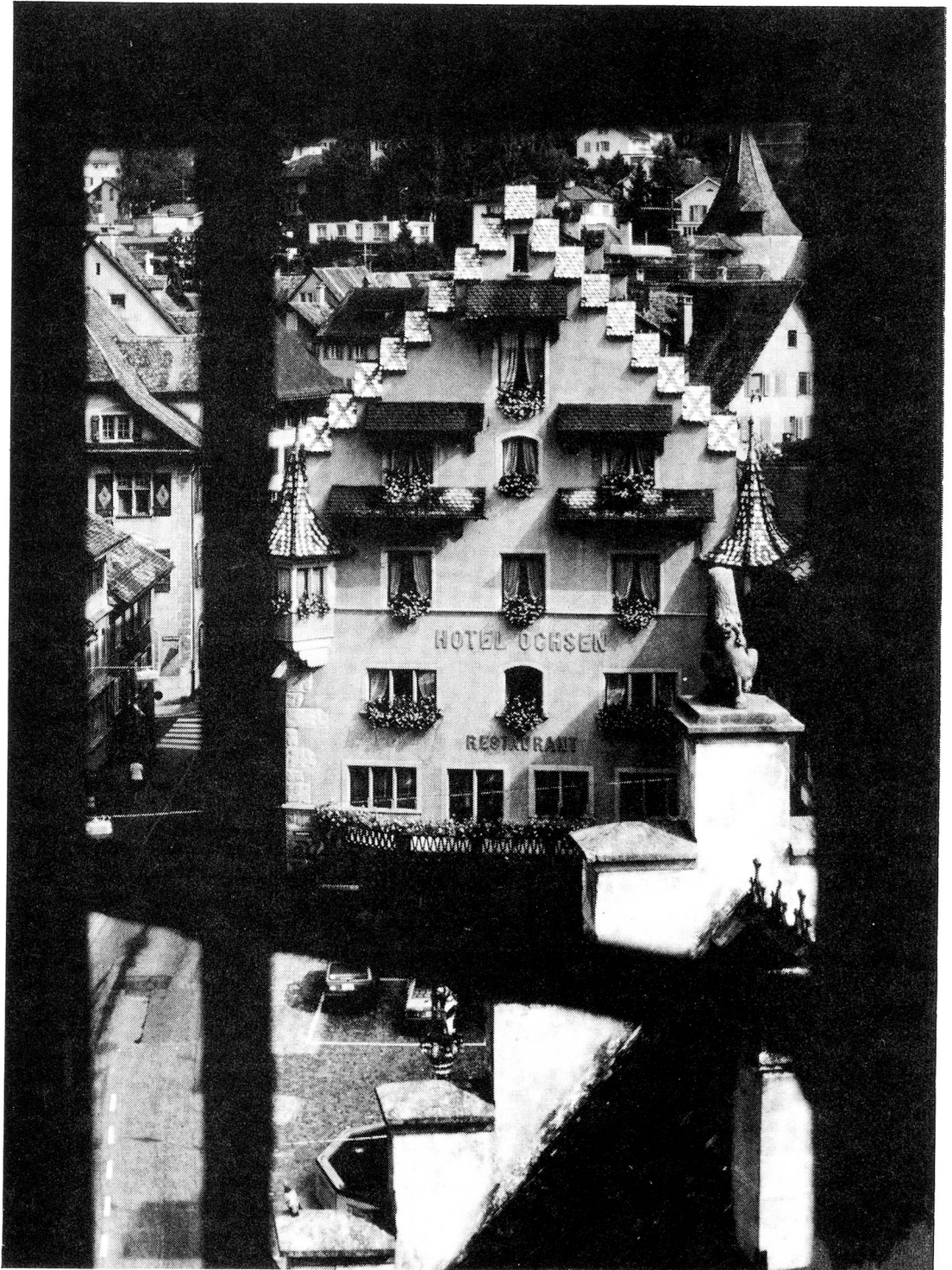
AFTER taking measures described by board chairman Otto Niederhauser as "in part bitter and in part harsh", Swiss charter airline Balair last year made a Sfr. 2.1 million net profit – wiping out a loss amounting to a similar figure the year before.

According to Balair chiefs, the result was achieved in part by reducing long-haul traffic by more than 17 per cent and pushing out the profitable shorthaul business 16 per cent.

Other steps taken were stabilising the US dollar exchange rate by means of forward transaction, modernising the fleet by leasing a new Swiss DC-9-81 machine and increasing the number of tour operator customers to broaden the market basis. Staff was also cut, but without dismissals.

Chief executive Heinrich Moser, who spoke of "ruinous competition" in the charter business worldwide, stressed that Balair had also gone into the black on actual flying operations.

Mr Moser said that although total income had gone down by 4.5 per cent to Sfr. 164.5 million, costs were pushed down by nearly eight per cent, resulting in a Sfr. 12.5 million gross surplus – a rise of more than 70 per cent over the previous year's figure.



Picturesque Zug . . .

The Hotel Ochsen that dominates the Kolinplatz in Zug was built in 1544 by Wolfgang Kolin. The three-storey structure has a ninefold stepped gable and two oriels. It is richly appointed and many illustrious guests have stayed there – Louis Philippe and Goethe among them. Today the restaurant is known for its gastronomic specialities.