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Launch of the M.V. "Romandie" in Scotland

Readers of "The Swiss Observer" will have noticed some time ago in the "Commercial News" references to an increase in the Swiss Merchant Fleet in accordance with the programme elaborated by the Federal Council and left to the Swiss Shipowners to fulfil with the help of the Government.

Following the institution of the Swiss Flag on the high seas in April, 1941, the Swiss tonnage was first constituted of ships in service transferred from other Nations. The total at the end of 1942 was 62,000 Tons.

It was only a few years after the war that Swiss Shipowners could begin to build ships and the first one to be built for the Swiss Flag was the m.v. "General Guisan", a motor vessel of 9,000 Tons, owned by the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. of Lausanne, which was launched by Madame Guisan at West Hartlepool in June, 1947.

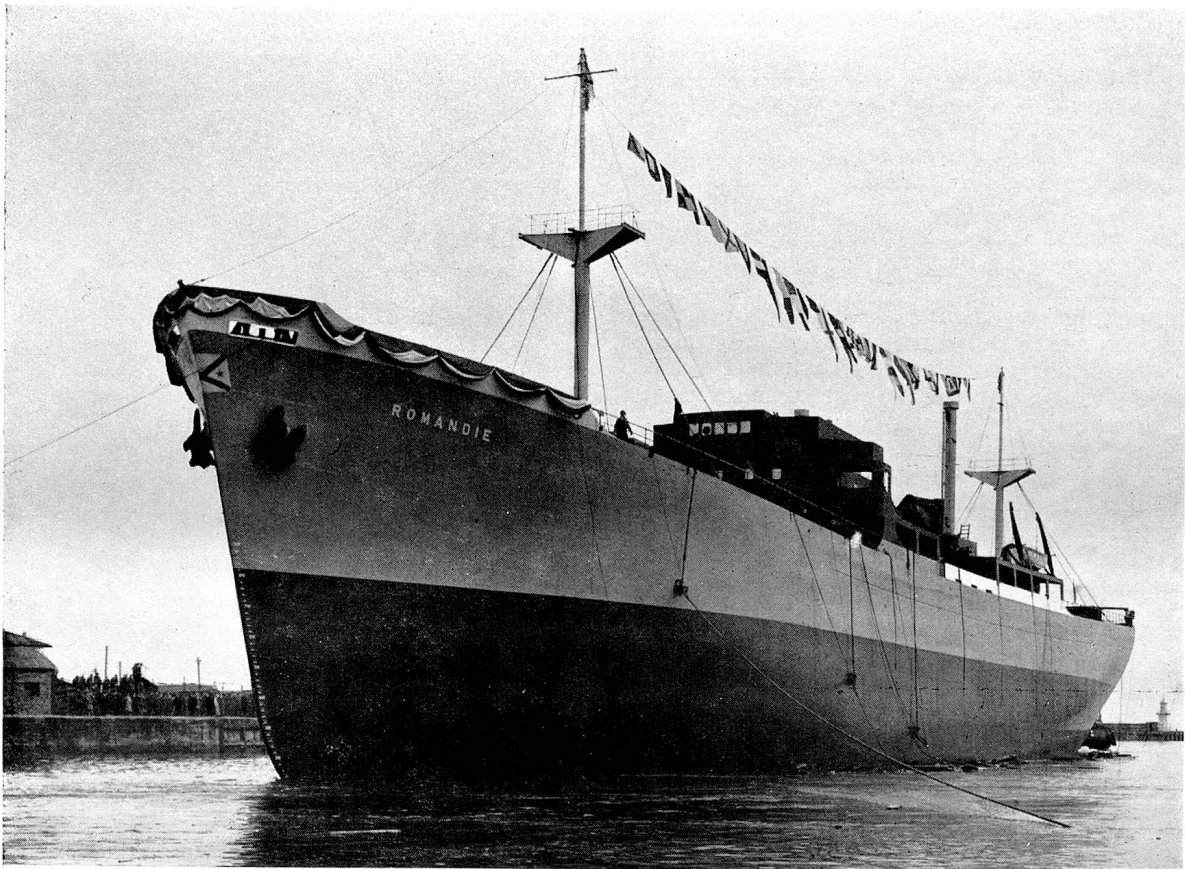
At the end of 1950, the total Swiss tonnage was 111,000 Tons, and when the programme mentioned above is completed at the end of 1952 the total will reach the figure of 220,000 Tons which is certainly quite substantial for our Country.

The Suisse-Atlantique S.A., which is the leading shipping company in Switzerland owned by Messrs. André & Cie. S.A. of Lausanne, again made history in Swiss maritime affairs by having the first Swiss ship built in Scotland. The launch took place on the 25th April, 1952, from the shipyards of the Burntis-

land Shipbuilding Company Limited on the Firth of Forth. This ship, a single screw motor cargo vessel of about 10,500 Tons was named the "Romandie" by Madame Alfred Demaurex, the wife of a Director of the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. in the presence of our Swiss Minister and Madame H. de Torrenté, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Bircher. Were also present: Mr. G. André, Chairman of the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. and Mrs. André, Mr. Alfred Demaurex, Sir Wilfrid Ayre, Chairman of the Burntisland Shipbuilding Company Limited and Lady Ayre, Mr. Douthwaite, Director of the Shipbuilding Company, Mr. Ballinari, Chief of the Transport Office in Berne, Dr. Duttwyler, of the Political Department, Mr. H. Ringgenberg of Messrs. Sulzer Brothers in Winterthur, Mr. O. Schneider, Swiss Consul in Manchester, Mr. E. A. Grau, Chairman of the European Grain & Shipping Agency Ltd., who represented the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. in this country, and Mrs. Grau, Messrs. T. Dodd and R. E. Maag, Directors of the same Company, and various members of the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. and Messrs. André & Cie. S.A. of Lausanne and their connected companies in Europe and overseas.

The m.v. "Romandie", of the open shelter deck type similar to the m.v. "General Guisan" but larger, is to conform to Lloyd's highest class.

Accommodation for officers, engineers and crew



" M. V. ROMANDIE."

will be situated in midship superstructures and will be arranged in conformity with the most modern standards for a vessel trading to the tropics. Artistically decorated public rooms are to be arranged for dining and recreation purposes. The entire accommodation is to be served by a combined mechanical ventilation and heating system. Provision stores, refrigerated chambers for ship's supplies and bonded locker are being arranged in the 'tween decks. Aids to navigation include echo-sounding gear and gyro compass with gyro pilot.

The propelling machinery, fitted amidships, consists of a Swiss built Sulzer two-stroke cycle single acting marine diesel engine, which has six cylinders each 720 m/m. bore with a 1,250m/m stroke. The engine will develop 3,940 b.h.p. at 121 r.p.m. continuously in service in high viscosity oil. All the engine room auxiliaries will be electrically driven.

A special plane had taken all the party from London to Edinburgh on the 23rd April, 1952, and for most of them it was their first visit to Scotland.

On the following day, they visited the Castle and Holyrood Palace and were much impressed by the magnificent surroundings afforded by the Castle perched on its rock and overlooking the lovely gardens by the side of imposing Princes Street. However, what probably struck the Swiss most was to find that Edinburgh had the unique privilege of possessing a real mountain in its midst: Arthur's Seat. In the afternoon, an excursion by coach was arranged to the Border Country where one can find many places associated with Sir Walter Scott and the past and present history of Scotland and England.

On that day, our Minister paid a courtesy visit to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and was entertained to lunch by his Lordship.

Before the launching on the 25th April, 1952, the whole party went by coach to the Gleneagles Hotel where the Burntisland Shipbuilding Company Limited treated our guests to a delicious lunch in the sumptuous hotel standing beautifully in the peaceful solitude at the foot of the Highlands. Our friend, Mr. E. R. Cottet, Manager of the Hotels Executive, saw to it that the Swiss Flag was flying brightly for the occasion by the side of the Union Jack.

The launching ceremony, favoured by lovely weather which we enjoyed during the whole time of our visit to Scotland, was performed without a hitch and one more Swiss ship, the largest of the Fleet so far, glided proudly down the slipway into the water.

In the evening, a dinner was offered by the Suisse-Atlantique S.A. at the North British Hotel in Edinburgh at which the usual compliments and speeches were exchanged. One feature of the dinner was the piping-in of the haggis which, as one can imagine, caused great surprise and merriment among the Swiss guests.

Monsieur H. de Torrenté, portraying admirably the significance of the occasion for the Swiss, spoke in these terms:—

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Senior Representative of the Swiss Government, it is my privilege to pronounce our peoples best wishes to the good ship "*Romandie*" which has been launched to-day and to bid her God-speed on all her voyages and pray for blessings on those who sail in her.

To penetrate into the illustrious company of

those who go down to the sea in ships may seem a rash undertaking indeed for a small and land-locked country like ours. Many may find it hard — if not impossible — to visualise the Swiss flag being flown upon the seas. But economic necessities and the growing barriers which unfortunately divide the world to-day, have forced us to this step. The lesson of two world wars has been, that we simply cannot do without at least some ocean going vessels in order to assure a minimum of food and essential raw materials for our people.

Our merchant fleet is small and we have no ambition to vie in rivalry with bigger nations. Our foreign policy is essentially a good neighbour policy. This has been recognised on land for over 150 years. I trust that this same attitude of our people will also be recognised at sea by all who meet our ships as well as by all those who serve on them. And it may be that in this small and perhaps insignificant way we may contribute a small particle to those most desirable of all goals — world peace.

I have the further privilege to express also this evening my government's and our peoples thanks to the Burntisland Shipbuilding Company, to Sir Wilfrid Ayre, the Directors, designers, engineers and the many work people — express our thanks to all those who have contributed their share to the completion of the ship.

Ship construction is a mysterious art for the sons of William Tell and when your people on top of it all begin to use nautical terms and nautical language — then we are really and truly "on the rocks". There is, however, sufficient similarity between the Scots and the Swiss for us to have all confidence in your work. Even if we do not under-



" PUSHING OUT THE BOAT."

stand all the intricacies of your craft — I can assure you the Swiss have sufficient knowledge of engineering to appreciate a first rate job when they see one. We all have admired the Scottish skill and Scottish workmanship we have seen to-day and are delighted that through this ship which you have built for us another link has been forged between our two countries.

A further privilege which falls to my lot tonight is to express my government's great appreciation to M. André and the Société de Navigation Maritime Suisse Atlantique. It is thanks to their courage and initiative that this ship has been built. It is their "private enterprise" — if I may use such a dangerous expression — which contributes to a large extent to the creation of a small Swiss merchant fleet which may mean so much for the welfare of our people. We all know the jokes about the Swiss navy and it speaks of the high courage of men like M. André and his fellow-directors that they were prepared to back their judgment and even risk ridicule in such an enterprise. The "Romandie" is not their first ship and will not be their last. Their enterprise is doubly meritorious because their activity opens up also new fields for our younger generation who find jobs as officers and sailors on their ships. They merit, therefore, not only the thanks of our government but the thanks of all our people, and we cannot but wish them success in all their undertakings."

Many names in a foreign language are not easily pronounced by the British but Sir Wilfred Ayre paid a compliment to Mr. G. André by saying that

"Romandie" had an agreeable sound in English and ran off the tongue so well. That was very nice for the Swiss to hear as the name is so dear to them, especially to all those hailing from the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

And now Good Luck to m.v. "Romandie" which is expected to be terminated by the end of July and to start on her maiden voyage on our National Day, the 1st August.

E.A.G.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique
(LONDON GROUP)

OPEN MEETING

Tuesday, June 10th, 1952, at 7 p.m.

Mlle. ALICE BRIOD,

(Joint Director of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, Berne),

will speak (in French) on:

"L'INFLUENCE DE LA FEMME SUISSE SUR LA VIE NATIONALE"

giving her rich experiences and observations on 25 years in her position,

at the

Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade,
opposite Baker Street Station, N.W.1.

All Swiss and Friends are heartily welcome.

CITY SWISS CLUB

Venez rencontrer la

Chanson du Rhone

AU DINER AVEC DAMES

qui aura lieu au

DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.1

le MERCREDI 11 JUIN 1952, à 7 p.m.

RECEPTION dès 6.30 p.m.



TENUE DE VILLE

Prix du billet : 21/- par personne