
AIR TRANSPORT BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE SOVIET UNION 1946–1992

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ABSTRACT: *Based on unpublished archival documents, published sources, and relevant literature, this paper examines the development of air transport between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union from its beginnings in 1946 until the cessation of services between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the post-Soviet states in 1992. In addition to the air transport agreements and the introduction of air services, the work of the Yugoslav–Soviet Civil Aviation Company YUSTA and the use of Soviet passenger aircraft in Yugoslav air transport are also covered.*

KEYWORDS: Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, aviation, air transport, Yugoslav Airlines (JAT), YUSTA, Aeroflot

Relations between socialist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union went through several phases between 1945 and 1992. The alliance from the Second World War and the close political, military, economic and cultural relations were replaced in 1948 by the conflict symbolised by the Cominform Resolution. It was only after the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1953 that Yugoslav–Soviet relations improved and co-operation was renewed (Belgrade Declaration 1955 and subsequent agreements). Nevertheless, Yugoslavia never fully returned to the socialist bloc and there were still differences and disagreements in relations with the Soviet Union (e.g. the “Little Cominform” in 1958, caused by Yugoslavia’s insistence on its own path of building socialism; the Yugoslav condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968). In the field of aviation, the Soviet Union was one of the most important suppliers of equipment to the Yugoslav Air Force from 1945 to 1992, except for the 1950s. Both sides attached great importance to civil air transport, even in times when mutual relations were at a low level.¹

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¹ Suggested reading: Л. Я. Гибианский, *Советский Союз и Новая Югославия 1941–1947 гг.* (Москва: Наука 1987); Branko Petranović i Sava Dautović, *Jugoslovenska revolucija i SSSR (1941–1945)* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, Naučna knjiga 1988); Бранко Петрановић и Сава Даутовић, *Велика шизма: четрдесетосма* (Подгорица: ЦИД 1999); Горан Милорадовић, *Лепо-*

Permits, a Joint Company, and Failed Negotiations

The possibility of introducing air transport services between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union only arose after the Second World War. During 1945, a Soviet Air Force transport group was stationed at Belgrade airport, commanded by a certain Major Orlov. Their aeroplanes also flew within Yugoslavia. In August of that year alone, Soviet aircraft made 62 landings and 53 take-offs at Belgrade Airport.²

The group commanded by Major Orlov was a military unit, which means that in 1945 there was still no regular civilian air traffic between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. However, the first steps towards its normalisation were taken in the autumn of the same year. On 16 October 1945, the Yugoslav embassy in Moscow informed the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that the Soviets were considering establishing a regular air service from Moscow to Belgrade. In March 1946, the Yugoslav embassy in Moscow informed Belgrade that Vyacheslav Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, agreed to open negotiations on an "air transport agreement" between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the USSR, but that Soviet experts were also dissatisfied with the Yugoslav draft and would propose their own. In the same year, Soviet international air routes, including those to Belgrade, were taken over from military aviation by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (Russian: Главное управление гражданского воздушного флота), better known as Aeroflot. The exact timing of the introduction of civilian flights on the Moscow – Belgrade route has not yet been researched, but it is known that they were carried out on the basis of special permits. The Soviet Embassy in Belgrade submitted notes to the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs with applications for flight permits

та под надзором: совјетски културни утицаји у Југославији 1945–1955. (Београд: Институт за савремену историју 2012); Đoko Tripković, *Jugoslavija – SSSR 1956–1971* (Institut za savremenu istoriju 2013); Ljubodrag Dimić, *Jugoslavija i Hladni rat. Ogledi o spoljnoj politici Josipa Broza Tita (1944–1974)* (Београд: Архипелаг 2014); Милан Гулић, *Од Батине до Галца: Дунав у југословенској политици према Совјетском Савезу 1944–1953* (Београд: Институт за савремену историју 2015); Александар Животић, *Југословенско-совјетске војне супротности (1947–1957): искушења савезништва* (Београд: Архипелаг, Институт за новију историју Србије 2015); Војан В. Dimitrijević, *Jugoslovensko ratno vazuhoplovstvo i protivvazдушна odbrana* (Београд: Institut za savremenu istoriju 2017); Илија Кукобат, *Совјетски утицаји на југословенско ваздухопловство 1944–1949: између сарадње и супротстављања* (Београд: Институт за савремену историју 2020); Aleksandar Životić, „Strah ili realnost? Могућност совјетске војне интервенције у Југославији 1948–1953“, *Istorija 20. veka*, br. 1, (2022), 107–128; Марко Б. Милетић, *Политика одбране Југославије (1945–1959)* (Београд: МЦ Одбрана, Институт за савремену историју 2022); Немања Глишић, „Руски и совјетски утицаји на српско и југословенско ваздухопловство“, у: *Тематски зборник радова „Сто десет година стварања и развоја српске војне авијације”*, ур. Видимир Вељковић (Ниш: Градски одбор СУБНОР-а 2022), 227–248; Љубодраг Димић, *Тито и Совјети (1944–1980): Стаљин, Хрушчов, Брежњев* (Вишеград: Андрићев институт 2024); Momir Ninković, „Jugoslovensko-sovjetska robna razmena 1946. godine“, *Istorija 20. veka*, br. 2, (2025), 387–414.

² Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), fond 620, Uprava civilnog vazduhoplovstva, fascikla 2 (620–2), Mesečni izveštaj o radu uprave vazduhoplovnog pristaništa *Beograd* za avgust 1945, pov. br. 47, 20. 9. 1945; Илија Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992* (Београд: Архипелаг, Институт за савремену историју 2024), 129–130.

for a specific period, indicating the dates and times of the flights, the type of aircraft, registrations, call signs for radio-telegraphic communication, and the names of the crew members. The Ministry issued the authorisations after consultation with the Directorate General for Air Transport (Serbian: Glavna uprava vazdušnog saobraćaja). The oldest known note of this kind is dated 1 November 1946, in which permission is requested for ten flights that month. The planes were to leave Moscow on 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27 and 30 November, fly via Kiev, Lviv, and Budapest, land in Belgrade the next day and take off for Moscow the day after. In addition to this service, the same communication requested permission for flights on a separate Moscow – Tirana route, landing in Belgrade on different days than the Belgrade service (three flights in November 1946: 2, 13 and 23 November, arriving in Belgrade and continuing to Tirana the next day, returning to Belgrade and continuing to Moscow the following day). Interestingly, American-made Douglas C-47 aircraft were used on those flights, although the same type was produced under licence in the Soviet Union as the Lisunov Li-2 with minor differences. According to Russian data, Aeroflot carried 4,194 passengers, 51.8 tonnes of mail and 161.3 tonnes of goods on the Moscow – Belgrade route in 1946, while 1082 passengers, 4 tonnes of mail and 67.9 tonnes of goods were transported from Moscow to Tirana and vice versa. The issue of the air transport agreement was not taken up again for some time without an explanation being put on record.³

In 1947, air services between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were still handled exclusively by Aeroflot using the same system. Nevertheless, Yugoslav–Soviet co-operation in this field was further strengthened by the establishment of the Yugoslav–Soviet Civil Aviation Company YUSTA (Serbian: Jugoslovensko-sovjetsko akcionarsko društvo za civilno vazduhoplovstvo JUSTA). The agreement on the establishment of this company, signed in Moscow on 4 February 1947, stipulated that Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union would each hold 50% of the shares in the company. Yugoslavia invested airports and ground equipment for communications and navigation, while the Soviet Union invested aeroplanes, spare engines and parts, motor vehicles and other necessary equipment. YUSTA began operations on 27 July 1947, operating ten Li-2 passenger and two cargo aircraft on routes from Belgrade to Titograd, Sarajevo, Zadar, Zagreb, Sofia, Tirana, Budapest, and Bucharest. It is interesting to note that in its plans for 1948, the YUSTA management considered opening international connections to Western Europe (Paris, Vienna, Venice, Milan, Turin) and the Middle East (Belgrade – Cairo via Turkey and the Levant), but not to the Soviet Union. Those ambitious ideas remained unrealised. The shortage of aviation fuel in Yugoslavia, followed by the Cominform resolution, led to the reduction of YUSTA services to the Belgrade – Titograd – Tirana route in the summer of 1948. Flights to Tirana were cancelled in September due to Albanian provocations. The

³ Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Srbije (DAMSP), fond Politička arhiva (PA), godina 1945, Saobraćaj, fascikla (F) 29, pov. br. 5242, Telegram Ambasade DFJ u Moskvi Ministarstvu inostranih poslova DFJ, 16. 10. 1945; DAMSP, PA, god. 1946, Međunarodni vazdušni saobraćaj, F-77, pov. br. 12860, Nota Poslanstva SSSR u Beogradu Ministarstvu inostranih poslova FNRJ, 1. 11. 1946; DAMSP, PA, god. 1946, SSSR, F-78, pov. br. 2447, Telegram Ambasade FNRJ u Moskvi MIP FNRJ, 6. 3. 1946; Дмитрий Соболев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1941–1960. гг.* (Москва: Фонд Русские витязи 2020), 117; И. Кукобат, *Совјетски утицаји*, 132–134; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 158.

last flight from Belgrade to Titograd and vice versa took place on 3 January 1949. On 31 August 1949, a protocol on the liquidation of YUSTA was signed between the Soviet and the Yugoslav governments, the return of Soviet property took place in September, and the entire liquidation procedure was completed on 29 December 1949. Thus, Yugoslav Airlines (Jugoslovenski aerotransport, JAT), which had also started operations in 1947, remained the only air carrier in Yugoslavia in the following years.⁴

During this period, Soviet-designed passenger aircraft were used in Yugoslavia for the first time. From 1946, the First Transport Regiment of the Yugoslav Air Force (which also carried out civilian air transport that year) operated eleven Lisunov Li-2s, while YUSTA used a further twelve. Their use in civilian passenger and cargo transport ended with the closure of YUSTA in 1949, while the Yugoslav Air Force withdrew them from service in 1971. Only one serious accident occurred during its civilian use in Yugoslavia. On 27 November 1947, a YUSTA aircraft crashed into Mount Rumija on a flight from Belgrade to Titograd because the crew had lost their bearings in very poor weather conditions. Compared to its Western prototype, the DC-3, the Li-2 had higher fuel consumption, a shorter service life for the engines and the entire airframe, a lower cruising speed, and a less comfortable passenger cabin.⁵

Although the system of issuing permits for Aeroflot flights to Belgrade was also applied in 1948, the Directorate General of Civil Air Transport (Serbian: Glavna uprava civilnog vazdušnog saobraćaja) of Yugoslavia asked the MFA to examine the possibility of concluding an air transport agreement that would permanently regulate the issue of air services between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In a letter, the Directorate stated that Aeroflot charged 8,160 dinars for the carriage of passengers to Moscow, that it had an office in Belgrade with two representatives, and that an air transport agreement should be concluded on the basis of reciprocity. While the Yugoslavs asked for negotiations on the agreement in March of the same year, the Soviets only wanted to sign a commercial agreement between YUSTA and Aeroflot, and stated that far more extensive preparations were needed to conclude an agreement between the two governments.⁶

⁴ Further reading: Чедомир Крунић, „Југословенско-совјетско акционарско друштво за цивилно ваздухопловство ЈУСТА”, *Лет*, бр. 2 (2000), 127–151; Milan Gulić i Momir Ninković, „Мјешовита југословенско-совјетска друштва. Случај JUSTE“, *Istorija 20. veka*, бр. 1 (2014), 143–163; М. Гулић, *Од Батине до Галца*, 133–144, 219–230; Милан Гулић, „Југословенско-совјетска мјешовита друштва – од наде до разочарања“, у: *Србија и Русија 1814–1914–2014*, уредник Михаило Војводић (Београд: САНУ, 2016), 307–329; И. Кукобат, *Совјетски утицаји*, 119–134, 198–204; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 99–108, 134, 158–159, 187–188, 200, 210–211. Similar companies existed in Romania (TARS), Hungary (MASOVLET) and Bulgaria (TABSO). [More on SOVROM companies in Romania, including TARS: Nemanja Mitrović, *Decenija iskušenja: jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1948–1958*. (Београд: Institut za savremenu istoriju 2024), 29–31, 57–58].

⁵ Further reading: Д. Соболев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1918–1941. гг.* (Москва: Фонд *Русские витязи* 2019), 216–217, 255–256; Ilija Kukobat, „Роџци ваздушног саобраћаја у послератној Југославији 1945–1947“, *Istorija 20. veka*, бр. 2, (2020), 179–180, И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 89–90, 198–199, 210–211.

⁶ AJ, 620-11, Dopis Ministarstva inostranih poslova FNRJ Glavnoj upravi civilnog vazdušnog saobraćaja FNRJ, pov. br. 48399, 30. 3. 1948; DAMSP, PA, god. 1949, SSSR, F-100, pov. br. 41670,

An attempt to normalise air transport between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union by concluding a corresponding agreement was only made after the Cominform resolution. Yugoslavia had previously concluded such agreements with Albania (five-year agreement in 1946), Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland (1947), and Czechoslovakia (provisional agreement in 1945 and permanent agreement in 1948). The Soviets were interested in finding a permanent solution to the issue of services for Belgrade and Tirana. It was important for the Yugoslavs to obtain the right to fly over the Soviet occupation zone in Germany and Austria, with landing rights in Berlin and Vienna on the routes to points beyond (Western Europe and Scandinavia). On 27 April 1949, during talks between Lj. Kovačević, the head of the Consular Department of the Yugoslav MFA, and Yeliseyev, secretary of the Soviet embassy in Belgrade, it was stressed that the issue of the agreement should be resolved as soon as possible, that passengers and crew members on flights to Tirana should have Yugoslav transit visas and that planes flying to Tirana had to land in Belgrade. The demand for visas was justified with the hostile measures of the Albanian government, which hindered the return of Yugoslav citizens to their home country. On the same occasion, Kovačević presented Yeliseyev with a note proposing the opening of negotiations on an air transport agreement and announcing that the validity of the permit granted in March for Aeroflot flights would be shortened from six months (from 1 April to 1 October) to three months (until 1 July). The Soviets reacted positively to the proposal to start negotiations on 23 May, pointing out that the Yugoslavs had not raised the issue since March of the previous year. At the same time, they protested against the fact that the authorisation for Aeroflot flights to Belgrade and Tirana had only been granted for three months. The Yugoslavs replied on 3 June, stating that negotiations could take place in Belgrade from 20 June. The authorisation was granted for a shorter period, as it was assumed that an agreement would certainly be reached by the time the authorisation expired. The Yugoslav draft agreement prepared for the negotiations contained general provisions on the granting of commercial rights to air carriers of both sides, tariffs for the use of airports, exemption from customs duties and other charges on aircraft, fuel, lubricants, spare parts, and other material necessary for the services, mutual recognition of documents on crews and aircraft, compliance with the regulations of the country over which flights were to be operated and at its airports, and assistance in the event of an accident. Two routes were defined in the annex: Aeroflot was to receive the commercial rights for the Moscow – Belgrade – Tirana route, and JAT for the route from Belgrade or Zagreb via Berlin to points beyond in the north. Negotiations began on 24 June 1949, but the last meeting took place on 8 August without a result being achieved. The main points of contention were the Yugoslav insistence on the compulsory landing of aircraft on the route to Tirana in Belgrade (the Soviets demanded that landing should be optional) and the stipulation that “the operation of air services of both sides will depend on third parties” if they were not to be flown exclusively over Soviet and Yugoslav airspace. The Soviet delegation left Belgrade abruptly, “conveying greetings to the head of the Yugoslav delegation through

Telegram Ambasad FNRJ u Moskvi Ministarstvu inostranih poslova FNRJ, 4. 3. 1948; Isto, pov. br. 47823, Dopis GUCVS FNRJ Ministarstvu inostranih poslova FNRJ 21. 1. 1948.

a third person” and noting that negotiations would continue through diplomatic channels. No further negotiations took place.⁷

Air transport between the Soviet Union and Albania via Yugoslavia continued to be handled according to the existing authorisation system, albeit with certain problems. The crews of Soviet aircraft flying to Tirana did not comply with regulations for flights over Yugoslav territory. From 4 January to 5 March 1950, there were ten cases in which Soviet aircraft reported to Yugoslav air traffic control only once or not at all during the entire flight over the FNRJ (Subotica – Belgrade – Titograd airway). Although the authorisations were granted only for transit flights with control landings in Belgrade and for business trips of Soviet diplomatic personnel, it was found that Aeroflot was loading and unloading passengers, mail and goods in Belgrade, i.e. that the landings were commercial in practise. In addition, an unauthorised Aeroflot representative in Belgrade was selling tickets. At the request of the Deputy Minister of Transport, Ladislav Ambrožič, the Chief Legal Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Milan Bartoš, issued a statement in April 1950 in which he pointed out that this practise could no longer be tolerated “because further toleration could have very unpleasant consequences”, and that the purpose of the landing could only be to control aircraft, passengers, and goods. At the same time, he was of the opinion that Aeroflot aircraft could only carry the diplomatic mail of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries if Yugoslavia was granted corresponding rights. Those facts were brought to the attention of the Soviet representative in the Belgrade airport administration on 16 May. He politely explained that he was prepared to hold talks with the relevant Yugoslav authorities, but that commercial issues would have to be resolved through diplomatic channels. As this issue could not be resolved even after repeated talks on 7 June, the Yugoslav Ministry of Transport instructed Belgrade Airport on 13 December 1950 to allow Soviet aircraft to land for non-commercial purposes only and to allow diplomatic personnel to board and disembark on an exceptional basis. On the other hand, the Hungarian-Soviet company MASOVLET received permission to operate flights on the Budapest – Belgrade – Tirana route from 18 June to 18 August 1950, with mandatory landings and commercial rights in Belgrade. MASOVLET authorised JAT to sell tickets from Belgrade to Budapest and Tirana on its behalf.⁸

⁷ AJ, 620-11, pov. br. 563, Dopis Ministarstva inostranih poslova FNRJ GUCVS FNRJ, 30. 3. 1948; DAMSP, PA, god. 1949, Jugoslavija, F-61 pov. br. 410537, Zabeleška o sastanku po pitanjima vazdušnih saobraćajnih sporazuma FNRJ, 8. 6. 1949; Isto, god. 1949, SSSR, F-100, pov. br. 47803, Zabeleška o razgovoru Lj. Kovačevića, načelnika Konzularnog odeljenja [...], 27. 4. 1949; Isto, pov. br. 48399, Nota Poslanstva SSSR u Beogradu Ministarstvu inostranih poslova FNRJ, 22. 3. 1949; Isto, Nota Ministarstva inostranih poslova FNRJ Poslanstvu SSSR u Beogradu, 23. 3. 1949; Isto, pov. br. 417316, Zabeleška o razgovoru druga [Iva] Vejvode [...], 16. 9. 1949; Muzej vazduhoplovstva (MV), Savezna uprava civilnog vazduhoplovstva (SUCVP), kutija 309 (SSSR), Nacrt Sporazuma o vazdušnom saobraćaju između SSSR i FNRJ, bez datuma i broja, verovatno 1949; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 153. Russian research states that Aeroflot operated no flights to Belgrade from 1949 and that Yugoslavia stopped servicing Soviet flights altogether. [Д. Соколов, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1941–1960*. гг, 135].

⁸ DAMSP, PA, god. 1950, SSSR, F-85, pov. br. 515074, Dopis Uprave vazdušne plovidbe Ministarstva saobraćaja FNRJ Konzularnom odeljenju Ministarstva inostranih poslova FNRJ, 29. 3. 1950;

The Agreement of 1955 and Regular Services

Conditions finally changed in 1953. The Yugoslav ambassador in London, Vladimir Velebit, informed the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (SSFA) on 26 February 1953 that news had appeared in the London press that Great Britain and the USA were calling on Yugoslavia to prevent the landing of Soviet passenger planes on the route to Tirana in Belgrade and their fuel supply. On 11 March, he was informed that flight operations would probably be suspended, but the resolution of this issue was postponed until further notice. A memo prepared by the SSFA stated that the Soviets operated four flights to Tirana per month (every Tuesday with a return flight the following day) with 16-seater aircraft (type not specified), which were always fully occupied. The Soviets lost eight aircraft in the winter of 1950/51 alone due to weather-related accidents, but still maintained the fastest regular connection with Albania. The landing of Soviet aeroplanes in Belgrade was mandatory, and the documents of passengers and crew were checked. The aircraft were not refuelled, and the Soviets did not require this. Flight permits were requested on a monthly basis but were issued by the Passport Department of the SSFA for each individual flight. The Yugoslavs only used this service to transport officials and diplomatic mail to the embassy in Moscow. This could also have been done via Stockholm or by rail, so the air link was not of great importance. It was proposed that the route, which was much more important to the Soviets, be cancelled by delaying the granting of flight permits without justification. In the event of a Soviet protest, which would have to include a justification for the request, Yugoslavia would have the option of rejecting the protest, thus cancelling the Soviet flights to Tirana for good. The Yugoslav Directorate General of Civil Aviation (Serbian: Uprava civilnog vazduhoplovstva, DGCA)⁹ insisted on introducing landings in Belgrade in order to collect fees for the use of the airport, while JAT was not interested in this line as it was unprofitable.¹⁰

According to Yugoslav records, authorisations for flights to Tirana were still being granted in April 1953 (the application was rejected at least once). The last permit was issued on 28 April. Negotiations on an air transport agreement did not begin until 29 October of the same year, but were broken off on 2 December due to differences of opinion between the two delegations. The Soviets insisted that only they

Isto, pov. br. 48088, Dopis Ministarstva inostranih poslova FNRJ Ministarstvu saobraćaja FNRJ „Tolerancija prema sovjetskom društvu *Aeroflot*“, 28. 4. 1950; MV, SUCVP, kutija 309 (SSSR), Dopis Uprave Aerodroma *Beograd* Glavnoj direkciji JAT-a, pov. br. 29, 17. 5. 1950; Isto, Dopis Ministarstva saobraćaja FNRJ Upravi Aerodroma *Beograd*, 13. 12. 1950.

⁹ Yugoslav civil aviation authorities were later renamed twice (Direkcija za civilnu vazdušnu plovību 1963, Savezna uprava za civilnu vazdušnu plovību 1967), but they kept using the same English translation of the name: Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

¹⁰ DAMSP, PA, god. 1953, Jugoslavija, F-53, pov. br. 42607, Telegrami Ambasade FNRJ u Londonu i DSIP, 26. 2. i 11. 3. 1953, i beleška, 3. 3. 1953; DAMSP, PA, god. 1954, Jugoslavija, F-47, pov. br. 413045, Dopis UCV FNRJ Prvom odeljenju DSIP, 21. 10. 1954; Isto, pov. br. 413965, Dopis UCV FNRJ Prvom odeljenju DSIP, 25. 10. 1954. Russian research does not mention the loss of eight aircraft on flights to Tirana in 1950/1951 [Д. Соколев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1941–1960*. 22, 329].

should be granted traffic rights on the Moscow – Belgrade – Tirana route and that landing in Belgrade should be optional. The Yugoslav side demanded full reciprocity on the Moscow – Belgrade route, an obligatory landing of Soviet aircraft bound for Tirana in Belgrade and the right to fly over the Soviet occupation zone in Austria on routes to Western Europe with landing rights in Vienna. Yugoslavia saw further reasons for breaking off the negotiations in the negative reporting in the Soviet press and Albania's unwillingness to normalise relations. Soviet diplomats in Belgrade tried several times during 1954 to raise the issue of flights from Moscow via Belgrade to Tirana, claiming that Yugoslavia's rejection of their proposals was a sign of a lack of will to normalise relations. The SSFA also took the view that it was possible to exclude the Soviets from resolving the issue of the air link between Tirana and the rest of the Eastern bloc, i.e. with Budapest via Belgrade, by means of an agreement between the three directly interested countries: Albania, Yugoslavia and Hungary. They declared that JAT could maintain this service and that it was even economically viable. It was only after an exchange of notes between the SSFA and the Soviet embassy in Belgrade on 10 January 1955 that a three-month permit was again granted for the optional landing of Soviet aircraft in Belgrade en route to Tirana, without commercial rights in Belgrade. The Soviets agreed to allow Yugoslav aircraft to fly over their zone of occupation in Austria. JAT opened a service from Belgrade to Vienna on 18 April of the same year. This kind of reciprocity did not last long. With the restoration of Austrian sovereignty in 1955, civil aviation once again fell under Austrian jurisdiction and Soviet authorisation was no longer required.¹¹

The impetus for the normalisation of air traffic between the two countries was provided by the visit of the Soviet leadership to Belgrade and the Belgrade Declaration of 2 June 1955. In the SSFA memo of 21 June 1955, the issue of the air transport agreement was described as one of the easiest to resolve. It was emphasised that the reciprocity of rights had been lost with the restoration of Austria's sovereignty. Moreover, a connection from Moscow would turn Belgrade into a kind of hub between the countries of Eastern Europe and the Middle East (JAT had already opened flights to Athens, Cairo, Istanbul and Beirut). Together with the Soviet Union, Yugoslav diplomacy was preparing for the normalisation of air transport with all Eastern European countries at this time. The Soviets also recognised the need to regulate air transport within the framework of an agreement. In the course of 1955, Andrei Gromyko, then First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, repeatedly pointed out to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the

¹¹ AJ, fond 837, Kabinet Predsednika Republike, I-5-b/99-1, Zabeleška o razgovoru državnog sekretara za inostrane poslove Koče Popovića sa ambasadorom SSSR Valjkovim, 8. 12. 1953; Isto, Zabeleška o razgovoru državnog podsekretara Veljka Mićunovića sa ambasadorom SSSR Valjkovim, 11. 2. 1954; Isto, Zabeleška o razgovoru opunomoćenog ministra Dragoja Đurića sa Grjaznovom, savetnikom sovjetske ambasade u Beogradu, 21. 9. 1954; Isto, Zabeleška „Avio-linija Moskva – Beograd – Tirana“, 14. 10. 1954; DAMSP, PA, god. 1953, SSSR, F-85, pov. br. 44384, Dopis DSIP Ambasadi FNRJ u Moskvi, 6. 4. 1953; DAMSP, PA, god. 1955, SSSR, F-63, pov. br. 18527, Elaborat *Odnosi Jugoslavija – SSSR*, bez datuma; DAMSP, PA, god. 1957, SSSR, F-99, pov. br. 427171, Razmenjene note po pitanju preletanja sovjetskih civilnih aviona [...], Beograd, 10. 1. 1955, 1957; Љубодраг Димић и др, прир, *Југословенско-совјетски односи 1945–1956. Зборник докумената* (Београд: Министарство спољних послова 2010), 643; Јово Симишић, *Био један ЈАТ* (Београд: Lighthouse Studio 2022), 61; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 170.

Council of Ministers of the USSR the need to conclude an agreement that would normalise air traffic between Belgrade and Moscow, but also to Tirana.¹²

The agreement on air transport between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was finally signed in Moscow on 3 September 1955. It gave “civilian transport aircraft” from both countries the right to carry passengers, mail, and goods on the route between Belgrade and Moscow. With the consent of the governments of the third countries through which this traffic was to be routed, destinations in these countries could also be included in both directions. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation of the USSR (Aeroflot) and Yugoslav Airlines were designated as carriers on the above-mentioned route. The contracting parties undertook to provide all equipment and services required for flights over their territory. The aircraft and their crew members had to have the appropriate documents (flight licences and logbooks, airworthiness and registration certificates, licence to use radio stations) during the flight. The aeroplanes of each contracting party had to comply with the regulations for flying over the territory of the other contracting party and the regulations for crossing the national border. Timetables and fares had to be determined by mutual agreement between the airlines. The timetables had to be approved by the competent authorities of both contracting parties and the tariffs had to be communicated to them. Charges and taxes for the use of “airports, their equipment and technical facilities” on Yugoslav territory were levied according to the official tariff, and the same charges on the territory of the USSR could not exceed this tariff. The same privileges applied to fuel and lubricants loaded by aircraft of one country on the territory of another country as to aircraft from third countries. Fuel, lubricants, aeroplanes, spare parts, equipment, and supplies loaded onto aeroplanes were to be exempt from customs duties and other charges if they were necessary for air services. The party in whose territory an aircraft of the other party was involved in an accident was obliged to investigate the accident, assist the crew and passengers, protect the aircraft, mail, and cargo, and inform the other party of the results of the investigation. The country in which the aircraft was registered had the right to send an observer. Technical and commercial issues were to be resolved by a separate agreement between JAT and Aeroflot, who were granted the right to represent each other in their respective countries. The civil aviation authorities of Yugoslavia and the USSR undertook to exchange all necessary information and hold consultations. It was stipulated that the agreement would apply from the date of signature, that it would enter into force with the exchange of the instruments of ratification, and that it could be terminated at any time. Termination would take effect after six months. This agreement is structured differently than usual, as the carriers and routes have been defined in the first article of the agreement. In other agreements of this type, the services and carriers were mentioned in the annex to the agreement, while the main text contained provisions on the determination of timetables and tariffs, documents for aircraft and crews, duties and taxes, accident investigations, and

¹² DAMSP, PA, god. 1955, Jugoslavija, F-33, pov. br. 48437, Zabeleška o potrebi regulisanja vazdušnog saobraćaja sa istočnoevropskim zemljama, 24. 6. 1955; Љ. Димитић и др, прир, *Југословенско-совјетски односи 1945–1956*, 733–735, 775–779, 781; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 165–167.

the cancellation of the agreement. A special intercompany agreement dated 1 November 1955 governed the representation of Aeroflot in Yugoslavia and JAT in the USSR vis-à-vis authorities and citizens, the maintenance and servicing of the aircraft and the payment and invoicing of the services rendered.¹³

On the basis of the agreement, Yugoslavia's DGCA issued a decision on 26 November 1955 allowing Aeroflot to operate the Moscow – Kiev – Lviv – Budapest – Belgrade route with two flights per week (Tuesdays and Fridays to Belgrade with a return flight the next day) with Ilyushin Il-12 aircraft. At the same time, Aeroflot was granted the right to transport passengers and goods from the Soviet Union and Hungary to Yugoslavia and vice versa with aircraft deployed on the Moscow – Tirana route. A separate SSFA decision of 6 December 1955 permitted overflights by Soviet aircraft "with optional landings" in Belgrade on the Moscow – Tirana route until 1 April 1956, on Mondays and Thursdays (return the next day), also with Il-12 aircraft. The aircraft flew over the Subotica – Belgrade – Peć airway. The Moscow – Belgrade route was officially opened on 29 November 1955. According to the DGCA Annual Bulletin for 1955, Soviet aircraft operated 19 commercial flights in November and another 19 in December, carrying a total of 209 passengers and 2,014 kg of cargo.¹⁴

The following year, Yugoslav-Soviet co-operation in the field of air transport was deepened with the purchase of six Ilyushin Il-14M passenger aircraft for JAT. This was the main short-haul passenger aircraft in the Eastern Bloc countries in the 1950s and 1960s. Even at the time of purchase, it was clear that they lagged behind their Western counterparts in several parameters. They had fewer seats, a lower cruising speed and higher fuel consumption than the American Convair 340 and 440, which JAT was already using. In addition, the Il-14 did not have a pressurised cabin, so its flight altitude was limited to a maximum of 3,000 metres. At best, it was on a par with the DC-3, which it was supposed to replace in JAT. The main reason for acquiring the Il-14 was the urgent need for new aircraft (JAT had lost two Convairs in accidents in 1955 and 1956 due to crew errors) and the fact that it was part of the Soviet investment loan granted to Yugoslavia in 1956. Although the Il-14 proved to be safe (there were no accidents involving JAT Il-14 aircraft) and was also used on routes to Western Europe, it only remained in service from 1957 to 1963 due to its inefficiency. The seventh aircraft of this type in Yugoslavia was used by the air force for the needs of President Josip Broz Tito.¹⁵

¹³ MV, SUCVP, kutija 310 (SSSR), Ugovor o zastupanju između Aeroflota i JAT-a, br. 155/55, 1. 11. 1955; Љ. Димић и др, прир, *Југословенско-совјетски односи 1945–1956*, 807–810. For an example of a "regular" agreement, such as the Yugoslav-Polish agreement of 1947 [И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 153–158].

¹⁴ АЈ, 620-78, br. 6362, Prepis rešenja UCV FNRJ o otvaranju linije Beograd – Moskva, 26. 11. 1955; Isto, br. 6582, Dopis UCV FNRJ o dozvoli za prelete sovjetskih aviona na liniji Moskva – Tirana preko FNRJ, 15. 12. 1955; *Uprava civilnog vazduhoplovstva: godišnji bilten*, br. 2, 1956, 17; Д. Соболев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1941–1960. гг.*, 205–206; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 169. It is unclear how Soviet aircraft performed nineteen flights to and from Belgrade during November 1955 if the Moscow – Belgrade service was introduced at the end of the month.

¹⁵ Further reading: И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 207–210.

Expansion of Traffic and Cooperation

Aeroflot continued to operate flights on the Moscow – Kiev – Lviv – Budapest – Belgrade route until 1962, with the Il-14 replacing the Il-12. Interestingly, capacity utilisation on this route did not exceed 40% at the beginning of that year. This was partly because foreign airlines in Yugoslavia were not allowed to sell tickets in dinars, but only in foreign currency (the only exception was British European Airways). The opening of the new Belgrade airport on 28 April of the same year enabled Aeroflot to operate aircraft with a much greater range and capacity. At the end of the summer flight schedule (31 October), the previous route via Kiev, Lviv and Budapest was discontinued. On 11 September, the Moscow – Belgrade – Rabat – Conakry – Accra route was opened with two flights per week, using four-engine Il-18 aircraft. Yugoslav authorities were willing to allow Aeroflot to transport passengers and goods from Belgrade to Africa until domestic airlines opened their routes. That year, Aeroflot aircraft performed 76 landings and 78 takeoffs at Belgrade airport. They carried 2,736 passengers and 50 tonnes of cargo, of which 1,445 passengers and 24 tonnes were in transit.¹⁶

At this time, Yugoslav air carriers began to take an interest in the Soviet market. At the end of 1962, the Ljubljana-based charter airline Adria Airways (Inex-Adria Airways from 1968 to 1986) wanted to explore the possibility of flying to Japan via Soviet territory, but without success. JAT planned to open the Belgrade – Warsaw – Moscow route. This and the increase in Soviet traffic made it necessary to amend the 1955 agreement. This took place in Belgrade on 27 June 1964, and Soviet aircraft were allowed to fly on a direct route between the USSR and Belgrade, as well as on the USSR – Belgrade – Italy – Tunisia – Algeria – Morocco – Mali – Guinea – Ghana – Brazil – Cuba route. Yugoslav aircraft were allowed to fly from Yugoslavia via Warsaw to Moscow and on the route from Yugoslavia via Warsaw, Moscow, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to countries to be determined later. In principle, commercial rights were only granted to companies from both countries on the route between Yugoslavia and the USSR. Aeroflot was granted exceptional commercial rights on the route from Belgrade to all countries beyond Yugoslavia, apart from Italy, Tunisia and Algeria, until Yugoslav carriers set up such routes. On transit flights beyond the USSR, Yugoslav aircraft were granted the right to take on board passengers and goods “to and from places not served by Soviet aircraft” and were allowed not to use intermediate landing points on any route. Non-scheduled flights, i.e. charter flights for tourist groups, could be operated on an equal footing so that they did not interfere with regular traffic. Even before the air transport agreement was amended, JAT and Aeroflot agreed on the fares for the Moscow – Belgrade route at consultations held in Moscow from 9 to 12 March 1964, namely: 131.10 roubles (\$145.60) for an outward flight in first class and 249.10 roubles (\$276.80) for a return flight; 109.20 roubles

¹⁶ DAMSP, PA, god. 1962, SSSR, F-130, pov. br. 46456, Beleška o poseti UCV Timofeja Glušajeva, delegata za vezu Aeroflota pri JAT-u, 12. 2. 1962; Isto, pov. br. 412927, Beleška o poseti UCV T. Glušajeva, 6. 4. 1962; *Direkcija za civilnu vazdušnu plovidbu: godišnji bilten 1962*, br. 9, 1963, 16–18; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 314.

(\$121.40) for an outward flight in economy class and 207.50 roubles (\$230.60) for a return flight; 1.32 roubles (\$1.46) for each kilogramme of excess baggage. Yugoslav and Soviet citizens were to pay 25% of the indicated prices, and a 50% discount was provided for citizens of COMECON countries flying on JAT aircraft from Warsaw to Moscow and vv. Although the timetable for the 1964 summer season was set during the consultation, JAT did not extend the Belgrade – Warsaw route to Moscow until 5 August 1965 with French-built SE-210 Caravelle jets. Flights from Belgrade to Warsaw and Moscow were later separated. In addition to the flights to West Africa landing in Belgrade, Aeroflot also established a direct connection between Moscow and Belgrade with Tupolev Tu-124 jets in April of the same year. A total of 296 Soviet aircraft landed at Belgrade airport that year, carrying 4,141 passengers and 87 tonnes of goods. Unfortunately, there is no such data for JAT routes.¹⁷

Co-operation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the field of air transport also developed in other ways. Yugoslav airports purchased equipment and vehicles from the Soviet Union. From 24 January to 1 February 1965, a delegation from the DGCA of Yugoslavia visited the USSR, where it inspected six airports and an aircraft factory and held talks with representatives of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MCA) and the Ministry of Aviation Industry. That year, Yugoslavia also joined the Civil Aviation Division of the COMECON Transport Commission. A similar visit to Yugoslavia took place from 22 to 29 March 1966 by delegates from the Soviet MCA, who visited several airports and other facilities. On several occasions, the Soviets tried to sell their passenger aircraft to Yugoslavia. In 1965, the Antonov An-24 was deemed suitable for Yugoslav domestic flights, the Il-18D for charter flights, and the Il-62 for long-haul flights. The Soviet company Avioexport submitted proposals for the Tupolev Tu-134 to JAT, but JAT experts replied that it was a Caravelle-class aircraft and that they were not interested in it. JAT rejected the Il-18 as early as 1961, and the Caravelle was introduced instead in 1963. Nevertheless, two Il-18s were purchased for the needs of the Federal Executive Council and President Josip Broz Tito. On the other hand, the charter airline Aviogenex, founded in Belgrade in 1968, began operations in 1969 with three Tu-134s, which had been acquired as part of an exchange of goods with the Soviet Union. The original aircraft were replaced in 1971 by the more modern Tu-134A with greater capacity and several technical improvements. Nine of these aircraft were in service until 1990. Two aircraft of this type were lost in accidents, in Rijeka in 1971 (crew error in poor weather conditions) and in Libreville in 1977 (inadequate ground navigation aids and poor weather conditions). This variant was known in the Eastern Bloc as the “Yugoslav”. Aeroflot did not operate similar aircraft under

¹⁷ DAMSP, PA, god. 1962, SSSR, F-130, pov. br. 420574, *Dopis UCV FNRJ DSIP*, 20. 12. 1962; DAMSP, PA, god. 1964, SSSR, F-207, pov. br. 429357, *Kopija Sporazuma o izmenama i dopunama sporazuma o vazdušnom saobraćaju između Vlade FNRJ i Vlade SSSR od 3. 9. 1955*, 27. 6. 1964; Isto, pov. br. 451205, *Protokol o pregovorima delegacija Aeroflota i JAT-a [...]*, 12. 3. 1964; DAMSP, PA, god. 1965, Jugoslavija, F-81, pov. br. 446119, *Informacija o saradnji između SFRJ i SSSR-a [...]*, 31. 3. 1965; MV, SUCVP, kutija 309 (SSSR), *Beleška u vezi stavova jugoslovenske delegacije, bez broja*, 20. 6. 1964; *Direkcija za civilnu vazдушnu plovidbu: godišnji bilten 1965*, br. 12, 1966, 14, 20–21; J. Simišić, *Bio jedan JAT*, 112.

the designation Tu-134B until 1980. Although these were high-quality aircraft, Aviogenex was only able to achieve positive business results after the purchase of two American Boeing 727s in 1983, as these had significantly lower fuel consumption and twice the capacity of the Tupolevs. By the end of the decade, they had been replaced by further B-727s and B-737s. Soviet aircraft were not used more frequently in Yugoslav air transport, as their capacity was significantly lower and their fuel consumption higher than that of their Western counterparts, which were also procured as part of barter deals.¹⁸

In the 1970s, air transport between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union expanded further. From 1970, Aeroflot operated some flights on the Moscow – Belgrade route via Kiev. The Leningrad – Belgrade route was introduced in 1971, and the Moscow – Zagreb route in 1972. From 1970, JAT operated McDonnell-Douglas DC-9 aircraft on the route to Moscow. On 23 and 24 December 1971, the delegations of the DGCA of Yugoslavia and the MCA of the USSR discussed the issues of air traffic between the two countries and the use of Soviet airspace in view of the opening of a Yugoslav air service to Japan the following year. It was agreed that 50% of tourists would be transported by scheduled flights and the rest by charter flights, with an equal division of labour between Aeroflot and Yugoslav companies. Aviogenex and Inex-Adria were to use diplomatic channels to obtain flight permits from Soviet authorities. In addition to Moscow, Yugoslav airlines were also allowed to operate charter flights to Kiev and Leningrad, while Aeroflot was authorised to fly to Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Ljubljana as well as Belgrade. The Soviets did not want to authorise the use of the Siberian route for foreign charter flights, citing excessive congestion and inadequate navigation facilities as reasons. In addition, the Moscow – Irkutsk airway was used exclusively for domestic traffic.¹⁹

Similar problems were also the subject of later discussions. At the consultations held in Moscow from 1 to 3 July 1975, the need for greater reciprocity between the airlines of the two countries was again emphasised. JAT was authorised to introduce a service to Leningrad and Aeroflot to Split. It was announced that the DGCA would consider each Soviet request for “additional” flights on a case-by-case basis, as until then they had been quickly authorised without regard to reciprocity. Instead of a permanent equal division of charter flights between Aeroflot and Yugoslav carriers,

¹⁸ DAMSP, PA, god. 1965, Jugoslavija, F-81, pov. br. 446119, Informacija o saradnji između SFRJ i SSSR-a [...], 31. 3. 1965; DAMSP, PA, god. 1965, SSSR, F-163, pov. br. 47118, Izveštaj o boravku delegacije DCVP SFRJ u SSSR, 11. 2. 1965; Isto, pov. br. 410207, Beleška o razgovoru vođenom sa A. Florovim [...], 5. 3. 1965; Isto, pov. br. 429026, Izveštaj sa službenog puta u SSSR Ivana Barbaroše, višeg savetnika u DCVP, 14. 8. 1965; MV, SUCVP, kutija 309 (SSSR), Izveštaj o boravku delegacije civilnog vazduhoplovstva SSSR, br. 06-1781/1, 8. 4. 1966; *Direkcija za civilnu vazдушnu plovidbu: godišnji bilten 1965*, br. 12, 1966, 13; Charles Kennedy, *Jetliners of the Red Star* (Claygate: Astral 2019), 28–45; Д. Соболев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1961–1991. гг.* (Москва: Фонд Русские витязи 2021), 95–96, 109, 131–132, 253, 273; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, passim.

¹⁹ DAMSP, PA, god. 1972, SSSR, F-116, pov. br. 41265, Protokol i izveštaj o konsultacijama između vazduhoplovnih vlasti SFRJ i SSSR, 11. 1. 1972; Milica Patrnogić (ur), *Statistika jugoslovenskog civilnog vazduhoplovstva 1970–1971*. (Beograd: Savezna uprava za civilnu vazдушnu plovidbu 1972), 22, 26; Д. Соболев, *Хроника советской гражданской авиации 1961–1991. гг.*, 143, 155.

annual agreements were to be made. The Soviets allowed Yugoslav charter flights only to their international airports, although Yugoslavia was interested in tourist flights to other destinations. The reason for this was that domestic airports did not meet international standards for equipment and flight procedures and did not have adequate police and customs authorities. In order to speed up the authorisation procedure for Yugoslav charter flights, the Soviets suggested that applications for several flights be submitted at the same time through diplomatic channels as early as possible, following diplomatic procedure. The question of the Siberian route to Japan had also not yet been resolved. Both sides agreed that the existing air transport agreement of 1955 needed to be amended, as it was by then outdated for technical and legal reasons.²⁰

These difficulties did not significantly hinder regular services, which was further expanded. In 1976, Aeroflot operated the routes Moscow – Belgrade (daily), Moscow – Kiev – Belgrade (Wednesdays), Kiev – Belgrade (Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays) and Moscow – Zagreb (Wednesdays) as well as Leningrad – Belgrade (Fridays) in the summer season with Tu-134 and Tu-154 aircraft. 31,335 passengers were carried on 852 regular flights and 3,035 passengers on a further 116 non-scheduled flights. In 1976, JAT offered direct flights from Belgrade to Moscow (daily), Kiev (since 1974, Tuesdays and Wednesdays) and Leningrad (since 1975, Tuesdays) with DC-9 and B-727 aircraft. In 1977, JAT also opened the Belgrade – Ljubljana – Leningrad route, which it then ceded to Aviogenex for the duration of the year, along with flights from Belgrade to Kiev.²¹

Later Developments and the Agreement of 1990

The situation did not change fundamentally in the 1980s. According to Yugoslav data, only business travellers and tourists used the flights to and from the USSR, with traffic increasing considerably in the summer season. Compared to 1979, JAT halved its flights to the USSR in 1980 due to the lower number of tourists, while Aeroflot did so to a lesser extent. Aeroflot still had a dominant position in non-scheduled traffic through seasonal routes and “additional flights”, as the Soviet authorities did not allow charter flights by Aviogenex and Inex-Adria. These companies insisted that such Aeroflot services should also be considered as charter flights and included together with JAT in the distribution of non-scheduled flights with the Soviet Union. Yugoslav carriers were not allowed to transport Yugoslav construction workers to the airports closest to their destinations in the USSR, as these were often not open to international traffic. The issues of modernising the 1955 air transport agreement and the use of the Siberian route for JAT routes to the Far East remained unresolved. Both sides were interested in increasing the number of cargo flights to supplement the

²⁰ DAMSP, PA, god. 1975, SSSR, F-135, pov. br. 419691, Dopis SUCVP SFRJ SSIP SFRJ, 15. 4. 1975; Isto, pov. br. 437602, Protokol i izveštaj sa konsultacija vazduhoplovnih vlasti SFRJ i SSSR, 29. 7. 1975; DAMSP, PA, god. 1976, SSSR, F-142, pov. br. 433936, Zaključak sa sastanka zainteresovanih organa [...], 29. 4. 1975.

²¹ MV, ZCV, Red letenja JAT-a, 1. 4 – 31. 10. 1976; *Savezna uprava za civilnu vazdušnu plovību: godišnji bilten 1976, 1977*, 50–52, 54–55; J. Simišić, *Bio jedan JAT*, 154, 173, 176; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 315, 317, 337–339.

overloaded railways. There was also the possibility that Yugoslav companies and scientific institutions would be involved in modernisation projects at Soviet airports. Aviogenex tried to renew its fleet by purchasing Yakovlev Yak-42 passenger aircraft, but without success. According to JAT flight schedule for the summer of 1980, flights between Yugoslavia and the USSR were operated on direct routes: Moscow – Belgrade, Kiev – Belgrade (JAT and Aeroflot), Moscow – Dubrovnik, Moscow – Zagreb, Leningrad – Belgrade and Kiev – Dubrovnik (Aeroflot). In the summer of 1987, there were seven direct connections: Kiev – Belgrade, Moscow – Belgrade, Moscow – Split, Moscow – Zagreb (JAT and Aeroflot), Kiev – Zagreb, Moscow – Dubrovnik (Aeroflot) and Moscow – Ljubljana (JAT and Adria). The air transport agreement of 1955 was finally replaced by a new agreement on 7 June 1990. In addition to harmonising the norms of the agreement with international technical and legal standards, the agreement significantly expanded and more clearly defined the commercial rights granted to air carriers.²²

Table no. 1: *Services granted to the Soviet air carrier(s) in both directions*

Points of departure	Points between	Points in the Soviet Union	Points beyond
Points in the Soviet Union	Budapest	Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split, Dubrovnik, Titograd, Skopje	Algiers, points in Brazil, points in Morocco, points in Italy, Tunis
Tokio*, Beijing*, Seoul*	Moscow	Belgrade	/

Table no. 2: *Services granted to the Yugoslav air carrier(s) in both directions*

Points of departure	Points between	Points in the Soviet Union	Points beyond
Points in Yugoslavia	Warsaw	Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad, Yerevan, Minsk, Tbilisi, Lviv, Sochi*	Pyongyang, Hanoi, Karachi, Istanbul, points in India, Kabul, Ulaanbaatar
Belgrade	/	Moscow	Tokyo or other points in Japan*, Beijing*, Seoul*

The disintegration of Yugoslavia also had an impact on air transport, firstly through the loss of JAT's market in Croatia and then through the introduction of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. The last JAT flight between Belgrade and Moscow took place on 3 June 1992, and traffic was resumed on 6 October 1994 to Moscow and on 4 March 1995 to Kyiv. Aeroflot, now the

²² DAMSP, PA, god. 1980, SSSR, F-122, pov. br. 457684, Beleška o razgovoru Ante Zelića, člana SIV-a [...], 29. 10. 1980; DAMSP, PA, god. 1981, SSSR, F-112, pov. br. 411990, Informacija o predstojećim bilateralnim razgovorima sa SSSR [...], 10. 3. 1981; MV, ZCV, Red letenja JAT-a, 1. 7 – 31. 10. 1980; isto, Red letenja JAT-a, 29. 3 – 24. 10. 1987; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Agreement on Air Transport between the Government of the USSR and the Federal Executive Council of the SFRY, 7. 6. 1990, https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/48913/, accessed on 15. 8. 2025; И. Кукобар, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 435, 453. Flights to and from points marked with an asterisk were subject to approval by competent institutions of the signatories.

national airline of the Russian Federation, resumed flights to Belgrade on 5 October 1994.²³

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Air transport between socialist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was launched in 1946 by Aeroflot with the opening of the Moscow – Kiev – Lviv – Budapest – Belgrade route and a separate connection to Tirana via Belgrade. Despite the good relations between the two countries, no agreement on air transport was signed. Instead, the Yugoslav authorities issued special authorisations for these flights. In 1947, co-operation in this area was expanded with the establishment of the joint civil aviation company YUSTA, which was dissolved in 1949 due to the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict of 1948. Negotiations on an air transport agreement also began in 1949, but were soon discontinued. Authorisations for Aeroflot flights to Tirana via Belgrade were granted until 1953. The air transport agreement and the resumption of Aeroflot flights followed in 1955 as part of the general improvement in relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. JAT did not open its route to Moscow until 1965, and in the following years JAT and Aeroflot connected Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad with Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split and Dubrovnik. The air transport agreement of 1955 was not replaced by a new agreement until 1990. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the international sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992 led to the interruption of flights to the post-Soviet region, which were resumed in 1994 and 1995. It should be noted that Soviet aircraft were not used extensively in Yugoslav air transport. The reason for this is the fact that Yugoslav air carriers were able to purchase their much more economical equivalents in the West.

²³ Чедомир Јанић, Јово Симишић, *Више од летења: осам деценија Аеропута и ЈАТ-а* (Београд: Јат Airways 2007), 138, 147–148; Ј. Симишић, *Био један ЈАТ*, 293, 301–302; И. Кукобат, *Југословенски ваздушни саобраћај 1945–1992*, 448.

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AIR TRANSPORT BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE SOVIET UNION 1946–1992.

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Summary

Air transport between Yugoslavia and the USSR was generally a reflection of Yugoslav-Soviet relations during the Cold War, with some exceptions. It was established in 1946, when Aeroflot introduced a service between Moscow and Belgrade via Kiev, Lviv and Budapest, as well as a separate service to Tirana. The following year, a joint Yugoslav-Soviet Civil Aviation Company (YUSTA) was established, which operated Soviet passenger and cargo aircraft on domestic and international flights. Despite this co-operation, only Aeroflot connected the two countries and there was no air transport agreement. Instead, the Soviet embassy in Belgrade applied for permits for Aeroflot flights to Belgrade and Tirana for a set period. These authorisations were granted by the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Cominform Resolution of 1948 and the disputes between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Eastern Bloc did not hinder Aeroflot flights. On the contrary, negotiations on an air transport agreement were held in 1949 but were cancelled due to differences of opinion between the two parties. Until the beginning of 1953, the Yugoslav authorities issued Aeroflot with monthly and seasonal flight permits for flights to Tirana. After that, they were issued for every flight until they were completely discontinued on 28 April. In October, new negotiations on the air transport agreement began, but were broken off again. The Soviets tried to raise the question again in the course of 1954, but without success. In January 1955, overflights of their aircraft to Tirana over Yugoslavia were permitted, and an air transport agreement was finally signed on 3 September 1955. On 29 November of the same year, Aeroflot resumed its flights to Belgrade. The agreement was later amended several times to allow flights on routes other than Moscow to Belgrade. On 5 August 1965, Yugoslav Airlines (JAT, the country's principal air carrier) flew from Belgrade to Moscow via Warsaw for the first time. In the following years, JAT and Aeroflot connected Belgrade, Ljubljana, Dubrovnik, Split and Zagreb with Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad. Other Yugoslav carriers (Inex-Adria and Aviogenex) operated occasional flights, with Adria opening a regular service between Ljubljana and Moscow in the 1980s. A new agreement on air services was signed in 1990. In 1992, air services between Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union were suspended due to international sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and resumed in 1994.

Another form of co-operation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the field of air transport was the use of Soviet-designed passenger aircraft in Yugoslavia. These were the Lisunov Li-2 (YUSTA), the Ilyushin Il-14 (JAT) and the Tupolev Tu-

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134 (Aviogenex). The most successful was the Tupolev, which was used by Aviogenex from 1969 to 1990, with the manufacturer even adapting the design to Yugoslav requirements. However, Yugoslav carriers were generally reluctant to use Soviet aircraft as they were far less profitable than their Western counterparts.

KEYWORDS: Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, aviation, air transport, Yugoslav Airlines (JAT), YUSTA, Aeroflot