

IATA - OVER 90 YEARS OF WORLD AIRLINE COOPERATION

by Albert Pelsser

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is an international industry trade group of airlines headquartered in Montreal, Canada, close to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). IATA was formed in April 1945, in Havana, Cuba. At its founding, IATA had 57 members from 31 nations, mostly in Europe and North America. Today it has about 230 members from more than 140 nations in every part of the world. It is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, founded in 1919.



Figure 1

In many countries, air services, whether domestic or international, were launched during 1919 on a sustained basis; that year is usually considered as the birth of air transport. There was sufficient air transport activity by the middle of that year, so that representatives of five air transport companies from Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Norway and Sweden met at The Hague, Netherlands from 25 to 28 August 1919 and signed an agreement to form the International Air Traffic Association (IATA). For the records, the Dutch company KLM was represented at the meeting and signed the agreement immediately after its foundation on 7 October 1919. The expressed aim of the original IATA, with its Central Office at The Hague, was the establishment of unity in the operation of air routes of affiliated organizations whose systems were of international importance. Figure 1 depicts a cancel commemorating the 30th anniversary of the creation of IATA; the postmark shows the Peace Palace situated at The Hague, Netherlands.

It is interesting to note that the Convention Relating to the Regulation of Aerial Navigation was signed by 27

States on 13 October 1919. This new Convention consisted of 43 articles that dealt with all technical, operational and organizational aspects of civil aviation and also foresaw the creation of the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN, that is, the Organization preceding ICAO) under the direction of the League of Nations; ICAN came into being on 11 July 1922. The ICAN provided machinery for the governments to discuss and standardize the facilities for which they were responsible. At that time, there were no international systems in existence covering weather reports, radio communications, etc.; although all equipment was extremely simple, it was necessary to start from scratch in devising procedures and allocating responsibilities. IATA and ICAN cooperated in all those technical fields where it appeared useful. All of the power, responsibility and authority were vested in semi-annual meetings of the entire IATA membership. From the very beginning, the emphasis was on standardization in all areas of airline operations. While the IATA semi-annual meetings continued to function as a committee of the whole handling any matters that were presented on the Agenda, the necessity for study and the preparation of reports led to the creation of various specialized committees, i.e. traffic, radiotelegraphic, legal, postal and cash examination. The expanding air transport network resulted in improved organizational efficiency of IATA, largely because of the existence of various committees, so that the general meeting was made an annual affair from 1937.



Figure 2

IATA gave particular attention to the major source of business for the airlines in the 1920s, i.e. the carriage of air mail. The first International Air Mail Conference, held at The Hague in September 1927 established the airlines as officially recognized mail carriers (see Figure 2). This was a true achievement, as there was considerable reluctance at that time on the part of many postal administrations to entrust their mail to the new mode of transport. Further to the creation of the Postal Committee at IATA, direct consultations were held with the Universal Postal Union on



Figure 3

many questions of mutual interest. In the 1930s, attention was given to the organization of night mail services and year-round links among countries.

As regards the conditions of carriage, the airlines faced a vast array of differing national laws concerning passenger and cargo transportation. It appeared essential for this situation to be covered by an international treaty; the Warsaw Convention was born in October 1929 which, although subsequently modified by a number of Protocols, had set an effective world pattern, i.e. an internationally accepted upper limit to airline liability in case of passenger fatality and also the basic procedures and practices for conditions of carriage and for traffic documents. This convention was followed by the Rome Convention of 1933 which established liabilities between airlines for damage to aircraft on the ground or in the air, and damage to third parties on the ground. The IATA Legal Committee was actively involved in the development of those international legal instruments.

Through regular meetings among the IATA members, considerable progress was made in coordinating timetables, a subject of great importance at a time when flight frequencies were relatively low and when each airline served only a limited number of destinations. Although

establishing fares and rates was not within the purview of IATA, voluntary measures for adjusting tariffs were proposed by the airlines interested in a given route during their group discussions. In the operational and technical areas, a great deal of progress was made in establishing industry standards and operating procedures with a view to increasing performance, reliability and security.

The *old* IATA was able to start small and grow gradually and was also limited to a European dimension until 1939, when Pan American Airways joined. It had developed a remarkably extensive and firm foundation on which further expansion could be based. With the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, civil air transport in the accepted sense virtually came to a halt and the activities of IATA were put in cold storage. However, events gathered momentum in late 1944 when the allied and non-belligerent governments held the International Civil Aviation Conference in Chicago; the presence of a number of international air transport enterprises in Chicago was considered an opportune time to hold a meeting looking towards the organization of a new association.

A meeting of international operators was held at the Stevens Hotel on 7 December 1944 at 9:30 to appoint a drafting committee to prepare the draft of the organization



Figure 4

and articles for an international air transport association. This committee met at the Carlton Hotel, Washington, D.C. from 11 to 14 December 1944; during the course of this meeting, Dr. Luis Machado, of the Cuban Expreso Aero Inter-Americano, extended an invitation, on behalf of his country, to hold the organization meeting at Havana in the spring of 1945. Forty-one airlines from 31 countries met there from 16 to 19 April 1945 for the International Air Transport Operators Conference and founded the *new* IATA (International Air Transport Association), with the mission to promote safe, regular and economical air transport, to provide means of collaboration among the air transport enterprises, and to cooperate with ICAO; the aims and objectives of the old IATA were thus broadened to include an active role in the establishment of fares, rates and charges for the carriage of passengers, baggage and cargo. The Havana Conference unanimously elected Mr. H. J. Symington (President of Trans-Canada Air Lines) as the first President of the Association and also decided that the first annual meeting be held at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal in October 1945; 300 representatives from the aerospace, aviation and aircraft industry met from 16 to 19 October for the first IATA Annual General Meeting and elected Sir William P. Hildred, Director General of Civil

Aviation in Great Britain, as Director General of IATA, effective April 1946 (see cover at Figure 3); the ICAO Council bestowed the "1965 Edward Warner Award" on Sir Hildred a few months before his retirement from IATA in 1966.

Article II of the IATA 1945 Statutes states that "The Head Office of this Association shall be maintained in the city in which the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization is located."; this article was later amended to leave an opening for a possible other place as determined by the General Meeting. When ICAO moved in 1949 to its new headquarters at 1080 University Street, IATA used office space for its quarters in the same Terminal Centre Building as ICAO, at 1060 University Street. The current Head Office of IATA is located in the Quartier International of Montreal and Executive Offices are in Geneva.

In 1934, the old IATA replaced a preliminary emblem with a new one (see cover at Figure 4), representing more adequately the aeronautical, peaceful and international character of IATA's work. This emblem was retained by the new IATA and replaced in the early 1950s by a newer as shown at Figure 5.

To ensure that cooperation between IATA (repre-



Figure 5

senting the international airline operators) and ICAO (representing the various national governments) would be simple and effective, and that they work closely together to further the development of international civil aviation, both

Organizations are located in the same city from their inception in 1945. IATA has an ongoing interaction with ICAO, i.e. the Air Navigation Bureau, the Air Navigation Commission (ANC - IATA holds a position of Observer at



Figure 6

the ANC), and the Regional Affairs Office; IATA contributes to various ICAO Technical Panels. In drafting standards and practices for civil aviation, the cooperation between ICAO and IATA is vital; IATA's technical work is supervised by its Technical Committee, whose activities can be grouped under several headings, such as avionics and telecommunications, engineering and environment, airports, flight operations, medical, facilitation, security, etc.



The Bermuda Agreement reached on 11 February 1946 (at the end of the Civil Aviation Conference held in Bermuda from 15 January to 11 February 1946; this Agreement was expanded in 1977) by the American and British negotiators, was an early bilateral air transport agreement regulating civil air transport; it was rapidly followed by a number of very similar agreements between other pairs of states, making it clear that the airlines were responsible for the first instance for agreeing to fares and rates and related conditions.

Although the Articles of Association of the new IATA made no provision for Traffic Conferences, it became obviously necessary that such conferences be established, at which fares and rates could be discussed and agreements be reached for submission to the interested governments. See Figure 6 showing a cancel commemorating the Traffic Conference, held in Salzburg, Austria in 1963.



Figure 8



Figure 7

During the Chicago Convention in 1944, no general agreement could be reached as to the manner in which international fares and rates were to be established; it became apparent that some kind of inter-airline machinery would be required for this purpose.

A Clearing House was established in 1947 at IATA for interline billing and settlement. Of crucial significance for the worldwide system were the measures taken over the years by IATA for standardization and simplification of tickets, air waybills and other documents used by passengers, cargo, airports and travel agencies. There is no doubt that IATA fulfils a vital role for the airline industry. Although individual priorities have changed considerably as time has passed, there is a growing demand for the Association's services; the international air transport system has grown to a highly sophisticated and global business.

Various countries issued stamps either to commemorate the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in their country (see Figure 7, Iran 1970, Japan 1959, Jordan 1997, Philippines 1979) or to highlight the international cooperation between IATA and ICAO (see Figure 8).

CHECKLIST

Iran	C89	1970 Oct 27	26th Annual General Meeting of IATA
Japan	680	1959 Oct 12	15th Annual General Meeting of IATA
Jordan	1585-1587	1997 Nov 3	53th Annual General Meeting of IATA
Malaysia	558-561	1995 Oct 30	50th Annual General Meeting of IATA
Philippines	1441-1442	1979 Nov 27	35th Annual General Assembly of IATA
Philippines	3252-3253s/s	2009 Dec 7	65 th Anniversary of ICAO
Russia	C10-C11	1927 Sep 1	First International Air Post Congress

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