

ICAO's FIRST STAMP AND REGIONAL AVIATION MEETINGS

by Albert Pelsser

The changed situation in the air resulting from the immense development of flight and the organization of a world network of airways during the Second World War made it clear that civil air transport after the hostilities would be dependent upon international cooperation and world-wide agreement. Discussions at the International Civil Aviation Conference convened on 1 November 1944 in Chicago, Illinois, USA, on the development of international civil aviation revealed sufficient consensus between the principal air powers and consequently the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) was established to ensure that civil aviation would be developed in a safe and orderly fashion.

The first meeting of the Interim Council of the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (PICAO) was held on 15 August 1945 at the Windsor Hotel, Montreal, Canada. From the beginning, it has been ICAO's objective to eliminate differences between countries wherever such variations would adversely affect the efficiency and safety of flight. International Standards and Recommended Practices for civil aviation were thus established by the Organization, calling for indispensable cooperation and world-wide agreements.

REGIONAL PARTICULARITIES

However, from the very beginning of PICAO's work, it quickly became clear that some of the technical problems confronting international civil aviation could best be solved on a regional basis among those States concerned in a given region. Within the framework of ICAO as the single world-wide organization dealing with international civil aviation problems, many particular regional requirements could more efficiently be considered through regional discussions, such as the planning of international civil air routes which had largely been conducted by the airlines flying those routes; coordination of trans-European air traffic with domestic and short-range overland traffic versus long-distance transoceanic navigation; and so forth. Recognizing the regional differences, ICAO had an active interest in providing the machinery by which civil aviation particularities of the individual regions could be examined.

During the second Session of the Interim Council in November 1945, PICAO had divided the world into ten flying or air navigation regions; areas were not all-inclusive and a certain amount of overlapping was necessary. Regional arrangements or special regional organizations, called



Figure 1

Regional Route Service Organizations, operating within the general framework of PICAQ, would be necessary to plan special measures of cooperation on air navigation facilities, to consider the application and interpretation of standards and practices to meet situations particular to a given geographical area, and to study and develop local operating practices supplementing the international standards.

Regional Route Service Conferences would be held for each region. It was, however, decided later to hold meetings covering two or more regions, thereby simplifying the problem of changes of procedures at regional boundaries, and in 1952 the number of regional meetings was reduced to eight. Such meetings scrutinized the region's air navigation needs, determined what airports, weather reports and navigation aids were necessary, considered the extent to which those already in existence met the need, and decided what should be added to make air travel safe and regular. Until April 1946, regional meetings were convened at the request of the Council by the designated host State; later, invitations were issued directly by the Council of ICAO.

During the Council's discussions held in April 1946, it was felt that the Route Service Conferences should be called *meetings*, as they were considered as purely technical in character. Moreover, the expression *route service* was found impossible to translate into French; as the meaning of this English term was not clear, the Council agreed to change the title of those gatherings from *PICAQ Route Service Conferences* to *PICAQ Regional Air Naviga-*

tion Meetings (RAN).

Due to the existence of military facilities useful for international civil aviation and their probable discontinuance due to the cessation of the war hostilities, early coordinating actions were considered desirable and necessary for four of the ten regions: the North Atlantic, European-Mediterranean area, the Caribbean area, and the Near and Middle East. Due to the drastic curtailment of military air transport services in the North Atlantic, there was an urgent need to discuss provisions to protect and support civil aviation operations in that area and the first North Atlantic regional meeting was held in Dublin, Ireland, on 4 March 1946.

FIRST MID/RAN MEETING

The Dublin meeting became the forerunner of a series of regional air navigation meetings held during the PICAQ years. The second meeting was convened in April 1946 in Paris at the request of France. Cuba would have been the ideal choice for the Caribbean meeting, but it was not yet a member of ICAO and therefore the third meeting was convened in Washington, DC, in August 1946. As regards the first meeting in the Middle East (MID), many factors were taken into consideration in choosing Egypt - its strategic position in relation to Europe, Africa and Asia; its international position from the standpoint of air transportation which had been demonstrated by the fact that many regular air routes pass over Egyptian territory; and the

experience of the Egyptian authorities in international air transport operations in the Middle East.



Figure 2

As Egypt was the very hub of all airlines between Africa, Asia and Australia, and some routes to Asia and America, Cairo was therefore a natural choice to host the first PICA Middle East Air Navigation Meeting, which was convened on 1 October 1946 at the Palace Hotel (see

hotel stationery at Figure 1) and concluded on 18 October 1946. The commemoration of this event with a special postage stamp was a justifiable move; however, the Postal Authorities did not have sufficient time to design, engrave and print an appropriate and fitting stamp. Accordingly, supplies from the existing stock of the 30-millime deep green stamp (Scott #C37) were overprinted to become Scott #C38 (see Figure 2). The first line of the stamp overprinting reads (in transliterating the printed characters) *Middle East Air Navigation Congress* in Arabic, and the second line *Le Caire 1946* in Arabic and French.

The overprinting in black was carried out hurriedly by the Government Printing Works at Boulas, Egypt, a printing plant which had no prior experience with this kind of work and no concept of the philatelic interest in slight imperfections. Consequently, the quality was not of the highest class, thus giving rise to a number of inconsistent varieties and flaws, which must have been caused by clogged type, dirt on the press or smears of ink before it was dry. In addition to the surprising differences in the spacing between the two lines of the overprint, the relative position of the 'L' in *Le Caire* and the last character directly above, the 'T' of the Arabic, may differ. Stamps with double or inverted overprints are extremely scarce.

Egypt Scott #C38 shows an Imperial Airways



Figure 3

Handley Page H.P.42 over the Giza Pyramids. Imperial Airways, the British national airline created in 1924, over the 15-year life had become one of the world's great airlines linking the British Empire with the mother country. The popular H.P.42 was designed at the request of Imperial Airways and its first true flight was recorded on 17 November 1930; it was withdrawn from service in September 1939 without having caused a single fatal accident.

It is interesting to note that the first case in Britain involving prosecution and punishment of a passenger for smoking in the toilet of an aircraft in flight was on a H.P.42 travelling from Paris to London on 17 March 1936; the passenger was fined the sum of 10 Pounds, severe enough at the time to deter others.

In addition to the overprint of the stamp, the Egyptian Postal Authorities also decided on a special cancellation, which is shown at Figure 1. The acronym MEAN stands for Middle East Air Navigation.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION

The regional meetings were closely associated with the establishment of PICAQ Regional Offices, with a regional Secretariat acting as agent of PICAQ in the fields covered by regional air navigation meetings and in assisting states in implementing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices. Although the original plan provided for the division of the world into ten air navigation regions, in each of which would be established a regional office, responsibility for these regions was initially divided among the following five field offices: 1) the European-Mediterranean Office in Paris, located initially in the premises of the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN, established in 1922) at 60 bis, Avenue d'Iéna; 2) the Caribbean Office first set up in 1946 in Montreal and later established in Mexico City in 1957; 3) the Middle East

Office in Cairo; 4) the Far East and Pacific Office in Melbourne, Australia and relocated in 1954 to Bangkok, Thailand, to be closer to the centre of activities of the area which it served; and 5) the South America Office in Lima.

Figure 3 displays an official service envelope used by the Paris office with the first slogan in use by that office in 1955; it shows an early unofficial emblem. It is to be noted that an office in Dublin operated from 1946 in 1948 for the North Atlantic region; at the time of disclosure of the latter office, the Paris office was renamed to European and African Office. Over the years, regional office names were adjusted to reflect their scope of representation.

With the explosion of independent countries in Africa, two additional offices were opened to serve the Western and Central Africa (in Dakar, Senegal in 1963) and the Eastern and Southern Africa (in Nairobi, Kenya in 1983).

The link between the Regional Offices and Headquarters was established in 1946 by a permanent body, called Regional Organization at that time. Initially, it would make the necessary arrangements for the preparation of the regional meetings and coordinating the activities of those offices. Later, it would also monitor the implementation of regional plans and the preparation of implementation programmes for guidance to the states.

CONCLUSION

Among the notable achievements of PICAQ, and later ICAO, as an international organization, its regional structure has demonstrated its value as an essential machinery countering any thread of isolationism such as that which occurred soon after the First World War, while it had also to dedicate its efforts to a one-world concept of cooperation for setting international standards and regulations in civil aviation among its member states.

CHECKLIST

Egypt	C38	1946 Oct 01	Middle East Regional Air Navigation meeting of PICAQ
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