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Vnukovo Airport at Your Service

Chapter I Vnukovo Airport's history

There is no other airport in all of Russia whose history would be so rich with events of such purport and importance on a national scale.

Even the Greater Moscow village of Vnukovo, from which the Airport derives its name, goes back to the early tumultuous days of the Russian State's history. These parts were once famous for their patriarchal backwardness and pastoral calm, with the air redolent of the abundantly growing flowers and herbage, tall and slender pines and firs in the surrounding woods interspersed with the picturesque whiteness of birch tree groves and the robust beauty of magnificent and sprawling oak copses. The woods and sunny clearings abounded with mushrooms and berries. All manner of wild animals roamed the woods and birds chirped and trilled all over the place. Back in those days even as now these environs went by the name of Vnukovo after the originally tiny hamlet with just a few households

scattered on a hilltop. The hamlet itself derived its name from the nickname "Vnuk" (a grandson), borne by its proprietor and landlord at the time.

This was preceded by the following chain of events. The Great Moscow Prince Vasily the III once went warring against the neighbors as the phrase went back then. Sharing one of the borders of the Great Moscow Principedom was the Great Lithuanian Duchy which by then had had the Russian town of Smolensk in its oppressive hold for more than 110 years. The massive troops dispatched by the Duchy would for no obvious reason ransack the Russian lands, taking peaceful Russian natives into bondage.

Such iniquities brought about Vassily the III's decision to teach the neighbors better manners, put an end to the out-of-control lawless raids and to recapture the old Russian town of Smolensk and bring it back under Russia's rule.

Having done as intended, and recaptured Smolensk, Vassily the III returned to Moscow. Now the Great Moscow Principedom had the reclaimed Town of Smolensk within its domain yet again. The local Smolensk princes and gentry as well as those of the Town's environs were called on to serve the Great Moscow Princely Throne in truth and good faith.

There was among the gentry of Smolensk one Semion Grigorievich who went by the nickname of Vnuk (the Grandson). Whatever information there had been of this person was largely lost during the course of history. The remaining facts that are few and far between, testify that as far back as in 1524 the man was a local Voevoda (a Russian equivalent of a governor general) in the Town of Murom and received a modest parcel of land just outside Moscow as a reward for his faithful and zealous service to the Great Princely Throne. That was where he relocated several of his serf peasant families and they in turn founded a small hamlet numbering but a few households at first. As has already been mentioned above the hamlet received the name of Vnukovo after its landlord's nickname.

The somewhat more detailed accounts of these parts reach us from mid-17th century. The local community tended to cluster more around the old and wealthy village of Izvarino back then. And as befitted its status of a well-off settlement, it had conspicuously well-built and stocked households, a cemetery and even a community church of its own, that of Elijah the Prophet. This temple can be seen towering over the selfsame village of Izvarino still.

It is an established and well-known fact that the peasants from the local villages of Pykhtino, Vnukovo, Izvarino, Likova, Shel'butovo, Baranovo and Postnikovo were actively involved in the guerilla warfare against the Napoleonic troops during the Patriotic war of 1812, especially so when the French were already beating a retreat from Moscow.

And despite the fact that their weapons arsenal consisted of little more than axes, pitchforks and harpoons, their attacks were decisive and daring and resulted in many a wagon train laden full with victuals and forage, firearms and munitions being recaptured from Napoleon's men, whereas the French soldiers taken prisoner were being sent off to the Russian Army headquarters.

At the turn of the XX century, following the construction of a railroad passing through this general neighborhood, the lands in the vicinity of Vnukovo, Izvarino and other nearby villages become favorite dacha (summer house and gardens) locations. A popular how-to guide on the subject of finding the best deals in dacha (summer-house) purchases and rentals dating back to the time touts the area around Vnukovo as a mushroom picker's paradise, fresh of air and abounding in river fish, game and fowl.

The last century's 30s turned an all-new page in the history of Vnukovo, Izvarino and other nearby villages. The Soviets as the new proprietor, went about reallotting and using the local land after a fashion very much their own. And more than anything else, it had to do with the booming development of aviation. The heretofore unheard-of surge in the Soviet state's industrial and agricultural output, the improving standard of living among its population and the expanding foreign relations coupled with the international unrest in Europe at the time, contributed to the creation of a sizable and impressive fleet of civil aircraft - the Civil Air Fleet (CAF).

Chapter II Planning and Construction of the Airport

Back in those days the Central airfield located on Khodynskoe Pole (field) as well as the one on the outskirts of Moscow, in Bykovo, were already outmoded and in need of major renovation if not of outright relocation as was the case with the Khodynka Field since the airfield could not be developed any further due to residential areas encroaching upon it from every side. Needless to say their residents were none too happy about the mounting levels of aircraft noise the field generated.

With those very reasons in mind the Sovnarkom (People's Commissioners' Council) of the USSR passed in 1936 a respective resolution on the construction of an all-new airport for the metropolis of Moscow. The site for the new airfield was selected to the Southwest of the city and within four kilometers of the Moscow-Kiev railroad. The research and development phase of the project was assigned to the Aeroproject Research and Design Institute then headed by architects N. Shchetinin and Ya. Zaretskiy. Head of Construction was I. Umov. General supervision of the project's progress was the responsibility of colonel V. Kaminsky.

The construction of the airport was the cause of many a sleepless night and quite as numerous cares and concerns for Vasily S. Molokov, one of the first Heroes of the Soviet Union, who was then in charge of the Head Office for Civil Air Fleet (HO CAF). An all-out, intensive effort encompassing the entire range of research, development and construction work had commenced, with each stage and operation of the project requiring a high level of skill and competence.

From among the sixteen potential airfield locations proposed, an 874-hectare Site 6 was eventually selected. The Airport got its name from the toponymic village of Vnukovo even before becoming a reality of brick and mortar. It was none other than V.S. Molokov and his colleagues who insisted on this particular name once the site selection process results had been in. And even though the site of choice was overgrown with woodwork and dense undergrowth it was undeniably the most acceptable one in terms of overall advantages offered by its location.

"I had scoured about the site in its entirety before becoming finally convinced of my choice" the legendary pilot would reminisce later. "And the project itself was a hard one to pull off. We were drastically undersupplied with cement and at times would have to use bricks to lay the runway base. There was an acute shortage of reinforced concrete slabs for the airfield's runway, taxiway and apron surfaces. The whole earthwork stage was an operation entirely based on manual labor.

The construction employed many of the local residents from the surrounding villages that were rather famous for and prided themselves on their masterful carpenters, masons and other craftsfolk. Here are a few reminiscences of the period left to us by Mr. P.V. Gruntsev, a resident of the Village of Izvarino at the time: "Even though the tract of land selected for the construction had a more or less noticeable relative elevation, its general condition was rather marshy and waterlogged. It was all surrounded and partly covered by woodwork and undergrowth, greatly hampering the progress of the horses that drew the logs. We had no other means of transportation available at the time. It was all just spades, wheelbarrows, saws, axes and horses. That was about as much tooling and 'machinery' as we could ever count on.

Hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of sand, stone and earth for the leveling-out of the airfield's base had been brought in from the Izvarinsky Quarry just outside Osorchin with the help of those hacks and fillies. Don't see how we could have possibly managed without them. And we had them working by the thousand as well, we did"

The construction of the airfield proper was finished in 1941, and in the spring of the same year Kliment E. Voroshilov, member of the Politburo in charge of construction visited the site. It was then that the decision to formally inaugurate the Airport on July 1, 1941 was taken. And then out of the blue all the communist party agencies involved with the project became inundated with anonymous poison letters insinuating that the airfield's surfaces was laid with numerous breaches of the technical specifications and misappropriations of construction materials by the project's management. It goes without saying that all of the above letters were strictly anonymous, there having been no shortage of avid and mind-numbingly prolific poison pens at the time. The symbolic arrows of these letters were first and foremost aimed against V.S. Molokov. And he had to stand up to the pressure however hard an effort it must have been for him. Because the invectives hurled at him covertly

were insinuating nothing short of acts of sabotage and grand theft. And the outcome of this situation would have been anybody's guess had not Molokov gone to K.V. Voroshilov himself and explained the real state of affairs at the project. Voroshilov promised to look into the matter.

A few days later the nation's first marshal arrived at Vnukovo Airport with member-experts of the Acceptance Board and fastidiously inspected the completed project's quality. And so as to immediately test the serviceability of the field and that of the runway in particular, Ms. Valentina S. Grizodubova, a legendary soviet pilot, and Hero of the USSR title-bearer, who happened to be among Voroshilov's retinue, asked for his permission to carry out a demonstration take-off and landing sequence and thus have all the i's dotted as it were. Having received the go-ahead, the star pilot presently took to the air in a heavy craft, circled over the airfield and landed it gently and with precision back onto the strip. Thus the airfield was immediately proven to be fully serviceable and passed the test with flying colors. It also resolved the potential conflict of interest which back in the day could have cost many their very lives.

Chapter III The Great Patriotic War. Vnukovo Airport - a Frontline Airfield

World War II soon reached the borders of the USSR, which delayed the grand opening ceremony by a long period. The unofficial opening of Vnukovo Central Airport did however take place on July 2, 1941. The first stage of airport structures was commissioned. This day is the de facto birthday of Vnukovo Airport.

Just like the rest of the nation, the aviators of Vnukovo were hoping for a quiet and peaceful life but those hopes were not to be. Not then anyway.

In the first days of the War the command of the State Air Fleet was passed by a resolution of the Council of People's Commissioners to the People's Defense Committee.

The Airport's staff was drafted into the Red Army's active ranks by default with the Airport itself becoming a major military air base and numerous civil aviation crews and divisions of the Moscow Air Traffic Hub and of other regional

head offices of the Civil Air Fleet started to arrive here in a hurry.

In mid-July, 1941 Vnukovo Airport became a frontline airfield.

On June 23, 1941, The Moscow Special Air Task Force (MSATF) was formed at Vnukovo, headed by V.M. Korotkov and called on to carry out Red Army's special missions.

The whole flight and military operations segment was within the remit of the Vnukovo MRO base then headed by P.N. Marzeiev.

Two air defense fighter regiments were relocated to Vnukovo to safeguard the airspace above and around the airfield, and along with them a special-mission long-range aviation squadron. Vnukovo also served as a home base of several paratroop air units and detachments.

When one comes to understand the scope of military preparations that had been made possible and were indeed carried out on such a short notice, then only the timeliness and importance of Vnukovo Airport's construction dawns as well as this originally civil Airport's invaluable contribution to the cause of future victory over the Nazi invaders.

Not-a-minute-too-soon is the definition that comes to mind with regard to the Airport's opening and the commencement of its operations.

On November 6, 1942 the MSATF of The Civil Air Fleet was reorganized to become the 1st Transport Aviation Division of the Civil Air Fleet (1st TAD of CAF) with Major-General M.P.Kaz'min in its command and two years downstream, on November 5, 1944, the 1st TAD of CAF was reorganized into the 10th Guards Air Transport Division (10th GrdsATD of CAF) and remained as such until the end of the war and the day of its demobilization.

The Li-2 transport was the workhorse of the airways in those days with the crews performing flight sorties round the clock and often returning to base in bullet and flak-riddled aircraft in dire need of immediate repair to ensure their airworthiness was restored and the Lis could be sent out on new missions the soonest.

Among the toughest and most responsible missions were those ordered by the Supreme Commander's Headquarters and bearing

directly on our troops' military operations as well as those of the guerilla resistance movement.

A particularly emotional and lingering memory among the Vnukovians of those days is that of the missions to the besieged Leningrad over and through the blockade and the Nazi-captured territory. The planes carried loads of foodstuffs and munitions bringing back starved children and the wounded on return runs. Often those missions would result in loss of life and equipment.

Just like the rest of the nation, Moscow and the surrounding towns and villages of the Moscow Area, were going through a horrendously difficult time in their history. The Nazis had gotten as far as the Village of Aprelevka by then, with numerous Nazi spies, commandos, and signalmen caught in the vicinity on a regular basis - all against the background of ceaseless air raids by the German assault aviation. But our people were working tirelessly, doing their duty both on the frontlines and on the home front with an unwavering conviction that the enemy would not get through.

With icing and slush significantly impeding if not altogether precluding traffic on numerous dirt and back roads, the Li-2s carrying neither any anti-aircraft guns nor armor plating for added protection against flak still had to be used as a principal military transport. Loaded to their absolute limit, they would fly missions day and night, across the frontlines and into the blockaded Leningrad or to the Belorussian guerilla fighters, carrying everything from classified mail containing special military orders and instructions, to arms, munitions, reconnaissance scouts, and paratroopers. A great many of these missions and sorties were prepared at and originated from Vnukovo.

It was somewhat later that the Airport's jacks-of-all-trades of ground crews fitted these craft with anti-aircraft machine guns, but until that time every single mission had been nothing short of a feat of daring and courage on the part of those who manned it.

Enemy planes were constantly on the offensive trying to hinder and undermine flight operations at Vnukovo. During their air raids and bombings the enemy was not only attempting to get as close to the airfield itself as was possible but also shelled the field's environs aiming at the fuel farms and flak gun units dotted around the area and covering the airfield, its

hangars and other facilities. But they would invariably stop short of causing any damage to the airfield's surface per se in hopes of using it themselves once they captured Moscow as their plans went.

The anti-aircraft gunners who were covering the Vnukovo field and were located in the woods near the villages of Baranovo, Izvarino, Postnikovo and Likova were the ones to carry the brunt of the Nazi attacks from the air.

The large-caliber flak gun installations mounted on hangar rooftops as a rule, and dotted around the flying squadron's HQ dugouts (where the ATC tower is located nowadays) were the targets of incessant air raids.

The ground handling company's rank and file were for the most part concerned with proper blackout procedures at the nearby Vnukovo Village and throughout the airfield facilities themselves.

Colonel V.M. Kaminsky had been commander-in-chief and chief executive at the Airport throughout the War and had done a great deal for the continuity and success of flight operations at Vnukovo and of its overall functioning and serviceability during that difficult time.

Putting up a good fight were the flight and gunner crews of the 1st Transport Aviation Division of the Civil Air Fleet, which, as was mentioned above was later reorganized into the 10th Guards Air Transport Division of the Civil Air Fleet.

The full scope of their military activity can well be traced and understood from the exhibits on display at the community Museum of Vnukovo Airport's History which, humble as it may be, has a rather impressive collection of exhibits, memorabilia and documents. It also has on display a unique collection of wartime and post-war photographs constituting a true pictorial chronicle of Vnukovo Airport.

The 10th Guards Air Transport Division saw the year of 1945 in with a decisive action. It bore the brunt of the preparatory phase and of the capture of Berlin itself as far as air transportation logistics of the Operation were concerned and subsequently played a role in the preparation of the crushing defeat of the militarist Japan's Quantun army. This was the very Division which until the last day of the War maintained the air links between the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Headquarters and frontline troops thus naturally playing an

instrumental part in the success of all our armed forces' campaigns and operations and in the ultimate spectacular Victory over the enemy.

On the morning of May 9, the Airport saw probably its most historically important and politically significant flight so far touch down on its runway. A Li-2 piloted by Captain Alexey I. Semenov's crew (subsequently First Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation of the USSR, Deputy Chairman of the State Aviation Supervisory Board of the USSR, Hero of the USSR) brought in on board their aircraft the Act of the Unconditional Surrender of the Nazi Germany

Also in the May of 1945 the border guards manning the Moscow immigration and customs checkpoint at Vnukovo Airport were the first to meet the flight from Berlin, the capital city of the defeated Germany with the Victory Banner on board.

Fifteen years downstream and also at Vnukovo Airport another momentous event of truly global historical proportions took place when on April 14, 1961, a formal welcoming ceremony was held on the airfield for mankind's first cosmonaut to ever venture into outer space, Mr. Yuri A. Gagarin. The Iluyshin-18 turboprop that brought him from the landfall area, was piloted by B.V. Bougaev's crew who was then Commander of Flight Detachment # 235 and later went on to become Minister of Civil Aviation of the USSR.

Chapter IV Vnukovo' Post-War Years

In September, 1945 Vnukovo's civil airport status was restored bringing it back to the originally intended use. It was then also that the Civil Air Fleet's Central Moscow M.V. Frunze Airport located on Khodynka was relocated to Vnukovo.

November 30, 1946 saw the demobilization of the 10th Guards Air Transport Division of the CAF.

The Division's assets and personnel were subsequently used to form the 1st CAF Special Air Group for domestic, intra-Union civil air services and the 2nd CAF Special Air Group for international air services. This was effectively the inception of scheduled revenue passenger services in the USSR. The Li-2 and Il-12 aircraft types operated on virtually all the scheduled services back at the time.

On December 6, 1950 Head of the Civil Air Fleet set up by his executive order the industry's first Flight Instruction and Training Detachment (FITD), which years later was re-established as Flight Instruction and Training Center - 21 tasked with the development and introduction of a system of instruction, training, upgrade training and skill conversion for civil aviation specialists and skilled workers of the USSR and comprising the entire range of specialties and disciplines within the industry.

Over the period since its establishment and until present time this institution of civil aviation learning has developed and successfully implemented training and upgrade training programs for flight, cabin crews and ground staff seeking qualifications to fly, operate or handle any of the domestically manufactured aircraft types: The IL-12, IL-14, IL-18, The TU-124, TU-134, TU-144, TU-154, TU-204, TU-214, The IL-76, IL-62, IL-86.

According to FITC-21's records, more than 100 thousand specialists have been trained here by now with more than 800 of them eventually having assumed managerial and top-managerial positions in the industry in Moscow and Russia's other regions and areas as well as all over the CIS countries and farther abroad.

With a view to successfully cope with all of its fundamental tasks FITC-21 had from day one been consistently developing, upgrading and modernizing its instruction and civil simulator offer, thus ensuring every domestically manufactured aircraft type was seamlessly introduced into service and would subsequently be duly maintained and operated.

With the entry into service of the TU-104, the first Soviet jetliner, the Ministry of Civil Aviation of the USSR gave the development of FITC-21 top-priority status and it continued since then as a model and state-of-the-art institution both in terms of civil simulator equipment, visual aids, and the quality of instruction itself.

The instruction and simulator training of flight, cabin crews and engineering and technical staff took off en-masse at FITC-21. Its graduates would pursue a variety of civil aviation careers in the civil aviation enterprises all over the USSR and in member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

Over the period of its operation FITC-21 has evolved from a small enough Detachment (with but two instructors on its staff, a total of five classrooms and a yearly class of 300 graduates back in 1951) into a major civil aviation education center, training a comprehensive range of aviation specialists and equipped with state-of-the-art civil simulators, a variety of technical and visual aids. The Center also boasts a highly professional faculty staffed with experienced subject and simulator instructors, forward-looking engineering and technical experts.

The Center's background image and reputation as an education establishment, which was actively contributing to the development of civil aviation in the USSR is extremely positive and high.

In 1952 the two previously created separate air groups were reorganized into the Moscow Transportation Head Office for Civil Aviation (MTHO CA) comprised of Vnukovo Airport, its three resident Flight Detachments and the Flight Instruction Detachment.

This event marked the appearance of the first-ever comprehensive air transport entity called upon to meet the domestic demand for a rapidly growing network and volume of air services in that far-off post-war period.

The year of 1952 also saw the opening of maintenance facilities at Vnukovo forming an MRO base for the LI-2s, IL-12s and IL-14s that were being used extensively on both passenger and cargo services at the time. It was also the time of commencement of the IL-14 revenue service out of Vnukovo. The type had been developed by the Ilyushin Aircraft Design Bureau, and was just off the production line and onto scheduled passenger routes.

In 1955 the pre-entry-into-service phase for the TU-104, the first Soviet jetliner began at Vnukovo covering the whole range of flight operation-, technical maintenance- and revenue service-related aspects and problems associated with the new aircraft type.

On September 15, 1956 a brand-new TU-104 piloted by Captain E.P. Barabash and his crew took off from Vnukovo bound for Irkutsk on its first revenue flight.

A new era in flight operations and civil aviation technology and equipment had begun - the jet age.

Chapter V Vnukovo Airport during the formative years of the USSR's and Russia's aviation

In the course of development of civil aviation in our country, it so happened that all the new aircraft types built in the USSR underwent their airline-testing and entry-into-service stages here at Vnukovo.

Vnukovo was also the birthplace and proving ground for of all manner of finesse, mastery, and skill of aviation engineers, mechanics and other specialists in the field, involved in the introduction into service and subsequent operation of new aircraft types.

A veritable school of professionalism, practical experience and finesse among the engineering and technical staff, flight and cabin crews and all the flight operation-related services emerged at Vnukovo.

In 1958 the pre-entry-into-service phase for the first Soviet turboprop IL-18 began at Vnukovo. It was a good aircraft, one of the best, in fact, in terms of technical specifications and performance, the levels of its technological flexibility in operation, and flight safety. All of its operators have nothing but the fondest memories and favorable comments to share about this craft.

Captain V. I. Vergun and his crew piloted the Il-18 on its first-ever revenue service on the Moscow - Alma-Ata - Moscow route that originated from Vnukovo.

The type also enjoyed unrivaled popularity among air passengers.

On April 24, 1962 a brand new TU-114 took off from Vnukovo's runway, piloted by Captain P.V. Soldatov and his crew on the Moscow - Khabarovsk - Moscow route. It was the type's first revenue flight.

Its first international revenue flight along the Moscow-Havana-Moscow route had also been prepared at and made from Vnukovo. The flight itself was made on January 7, 1963 piloted by Captain Kh. N. Tskhovrebov and his crew and later into the flight by a relief crew with Captain A.K. Vitkovsky in command.

The general public was overawed by and would marvel at the new turboprop of proportions that were truly gigantic for that time. And the aircraft, a marvel of technology that it was, did give good cause to wonder and was in itself ample proof that the nation had learned not only to design and build state-of-the-art, competitive aircraft, but also to operate them safely and efficiently.

Only a few of the world's nations were able to achieve such results in their civil aviation development at the time.

While the medium and long-range market niches had been successfully filled with the TU-104, TU-114, the IL-18 and AN-10 aircraft, the country continued to experience a shortage of modern aircraft on its short-haul commuter routes. The answer came in the form of the TU-124 feeder twinjet and the An-24 regional turboprop.

Yet again it fell to the aviation community of Vnukovo to prepare and implement the TU-124's entry into service.

The first TU-124 revenue flight took off from Vnukovo on January 11, 1962 and was piloted by Captain N. Svezhentsev and crew. The flight's destination was Adler - the airport of the Black Sea resort town of Sochi.

Subsequently the Tu-124 would successfully operate on both domestic and international routes. Aircraft of this type were on display at a number of international exhibitions in Leipzig, Budapest, Poznan, and Bamako, invariably attracting potential airline customers and acclaim as one of the world's best passenger aircraft.

In 1964, Vnukovo airport received the all-new TU-134 twinjet for field trials and entry into service. Captain A.D. Kalina and crew took it on its first revenue flight on September 29, 1964 on the Moscow-Adler-Moscow route with members of the press on board.

Shortly thereafter the new jet was already actively plying the routes, connecting Vnukovo with Murmansk, Tyumen, Soukhoumi, Kishinev.

In the early 70s the aircraft fleet at Vnukovo received a new addition - the TU-154 medium haul trijet.

On February 9, 1972 the TU-154 with Captain Ye. I. Bagmut and crew at the controls, made its first revenue flight from Vnukovo to Mineralnie Vody.

The same month saw the commencement of scheduled TU-154 services on the Moscow-Simferopol-Moscow route and somewhat later another route, namely the Moscow-Cheliabinsk-Moscow one received the comfort and speed of jet service as delivered by the TU-154.

The TU-154's successful entry into service was made possible thanks to the impressive preparatory work carried out by the Airport's ground services. It also should be noted that with the introduction of the Tu-154 on scheduled trunk routes, passenger numbers started growing at a rate close to exponential.

The TU-154 and its derivatives had for a long period become the conspicuously predominant aircraft type at Vnukovo and a true workhorse of medium-range routes.

This aircraft had truly become the focal point of many people's careers and numerous attainments of the Airport's people had to do with it quite specifically.

In May 1971, Vnukovo Airport hosted a civil aircraft and helicopter display, the principal aim of which was to showcase and promote the Soviet achievements in civil aviation.

The choice of venue for the exhibition had been to a great degree influenced by the lofty standards of technical and flight personnel training firmly established and maintained at Vnukovo by then, as well as the quality of service and high qualifications of the ground staff here.

It so happens historically that Vnukovo was and still is performing a special and significant function, namely that of field trials and entry into service of new domestically manufactured commercial aircraft types. It has served as a proving ground for the IL-18, TU-104, TU-114, TU-124, TU-134, TU-154.

In 1979 the field trials of the first Soviet wide-body, the IL-86 commenced. The type was delivered to Vnukovo for field trials on September 26, 1979. A set of new and more stringent rules governing the handling and maintenance of the jumbo led to an unavoidable departure from the traditional management

structure of maintenance facilities for a mix of aircraft types and the creation of an IL-86-specific, dedicated facility.

The most complex problem however was the aircraft's ground handling. Brand new technological approaches to its solutions had to be found. The jet was the first ever twin-aisle multiseater for that period.

No stone had been left unturned to ensure the aircraft's successful operation.

The first IL-86 revenue flight out of Vnukovo was made by Captain V.A. Kalimanov, First Officer A.S. Kaledin and crew on the Moscow-Tashkent-Moscow route.

Shortly after its first revenue flight to Tashkent the aircraft was introduced on the Moscow-Mineralnye Vody-Moscow, Moscow, Simferopol-Moscow, and Moscow-Novosibirsk-Moscow routes.

The IL-86 being a large craft had just as significant and expansive a destiny in store for her.

Half a year later the IL-86 completed field trials at and was put into service on international routes out of Sheremetyevo International, predominantly operating on routes to Western Europe.

Vnukovo Airport had invariably maintained a leading position in the industry constantly ranking among its top performers. It had for decades on end remained the trend-setting civil aviation center spearheading attainments in aeronautical research and field-testing of new aircraft and was continuously introducing and furthering cutting-edge technology and innovations in its operations.

The word stasis has always been a nonsense term here, everything had to develop and grow dynamically and did so to match the new standards and requirements the introduction of new aircraft types tended to impose.

Concurrently with the field-testing and introduction of new aircraft types, all the Airport's top management and staff specialists were actively involved among other things in improving and modernizing the airport operations themselves, trying out and adopting new economic management approaches, customer service and aircraft ground handling technology.

The advent of jet propulsion spelled numerous innovations and lots of new uncharted territory as it were for flight and cabin crews on the one hand and ground and flightline servicemen on the other.

Aeronautical terminology alone experienced a considerable boost and was augmented by numerous new concepts and notions such as a jet engine, jet propulsion, thrust reversal, laminar stream, compression shock, jet stream, etc.

Aircrews, ground staff, and other specialists had to gradually get used to the idea of higher speed and greater altitude that the new jetliners commanded.

New tasks and problems had to be solved by air traffic controllers also

The top management of the State Head Office of Civil Air Fleet had concurred that from then on the training of aircrews and ground staff preparing them for the introduction of new equipment with jet and gas turbine engines had to be located specifically at Vnukovo Airport. This decision also held true for all the ground staff and facilities preparation at Vnukovo. Even as the new aircraft types were being readied for entry into service, new lightweight-structure-type facilities would be erected to house laboratories for testing aircraft systems and related equipment.

The new equipment had taught the Vnukovo aeronautical community to reckon with and observe the strict laws of flying, and helped foster the work ethos of responsibility and attention to detail.

And those were the aviators with plenty of guts, who had endured the crucible of World War II, which also was a great school in responsibility, thoroughness and persistence. In other words they were equal to any task.

On April 14, 1963 the new Vnukovo-2 terminal was inaugurated, the one to handle flights carrying heads of state, members of government, foreign dignitaries and official delegations.

This particular specialization of the Terminal had made government and VIP flights almost exclusively the province of Vnukovo and brought on a new degree of responsibility at all levels at the Airport. And the Airport has been handling these

particular flight operations successfully and around the clock ever since.

The year of 1963 saw the creation of the Vnukovo Unified Flight Detachment (UFD) with the Airport structurally integrated therein. This entity continued in existence as far down the line as the mid-seventies.

But even then an acute need for a more effective airport management and production control system was felt, especially in its main line of business - flight operations and passenger handling management.

Unified Flight Detachment Commander Boris E. Panyukov, subsequently Minister of Civil Aviation of the USSR, was one of the originators of a detailed analysis of the entire production cycle of preflight aircraft handling, including factual operation-by-operation real-time metering and coordination of technological schedules.

Expert groups had been formed to look into ways of improving and optimizing the existing production control and management system.

That brought about new groundbreaking solutions to streamlining the corporate structure of the UFD and its production control and management system.

An administrative regulation "On the UFD comprehensive work shifts" had been drafted and put into effect thus introducing an all-new production unit within the UFD - a comprehensive shift headed by the Airport's rotating deputy general manager. Furthermore, both the status and administrative powers of the rotating deputy general manager were elevated to equal those of a UFD Deputy Commander.

Even the first few months of its implementation proved the new management system's high level of effectiveness.

The novel production organization structure at Vnukovo as well as the innovative solution and practice of comprehensive work shifts attracted the attention and a prolonged interested scrutiny by the USSR's Ministry of Civil Aviation. A short while later the Ministry issued a recommendation to spread and apply the Vnukovo aviators' experience not only within the country's civil aviation but also in its other branches of industry and economy with continuous production cycles.

A veritable breakthrough in the Airport's development was made thanks largely to the continued effort and high professionalism on the part of numerous managers and experts, and resulted in the Airport's qualifying for the ICAO category II.

This in itself was no mean achievement and became a watershed for both the flight and the engineering & technical staff, including among others the radiolocation and radio navigation folk. The flight operations staff had been preparing flight crews for this challenging work whereas the ground services were putting into operation and learning how to operate new radiolocation and radio navigation aids to enable flight operations in reduced visibility and weather conditions. Other prerequisite works and operations were being carried out on the airfield also.

The importance of the fact that the Airport was among the country's first to have received ICAO Category II classification and it's bearing directly on Vnukovo's continued smooth operation simply cannot be overemphasized.

The Airport experienced another significant positive influence on its development at the time of preparations for the hosting of the XXII Olympics in Moscow.

The Communist Party's Central Committee and the USSR's Council of Ministers passed a joint resolution on "Steps To Be Taken in Preparation For The Hosting of The 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow". A similarly entitled executive order was issued by the Moscow Transportation Head Office for Civil Aviation. A special board chaired by First Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation A.N. Kamrich was set up at the Ministry of Civil Aviation to handle the task of preparation.

Contributing significantly to Vnukovo's preparation for the Olympics at the time was First Deputy Head of Production Control V.V. Baranov.

In 1997 the '80 Olympic Games Committee and the USSR Ministry of Civil Aviation signed an agreement appointing Aeroflot the official Olympic carrier of the XXII Games.

A great deal had been done by the Aeroflot people to ensure the Games were impeccably organized and their participants and guests received quality customer service as Aeroflot's passengers.

Here's what Mr. G. F. Andreiev who was General Manager of the Vnukovo Industrial Association at the time had to say in an article written for a branch journal: "Vnukovo has been reliably serving the Muscovites and our town's guests for several decades now. With the introduction of jet propulsion on our trunk airways, the geographic outreach and subsequently the Airport's route network have grown considerably both domestically and internationally. Next to the Airport's first passenger terminal, the second spacious one has just sprung up, a new cargo facility and an ATC tower have been put into operation, the MRO base has also been expanded considerably. The Airport has received a great capacity boost with the opening of its second runway. An all-new computing facility also opened its doors. Both the apron area and the forecourt (the area in front of the passenger terminals townside) have been impressively expanded with the forecourt's old bus station having been augmented by a new extension. In the late 70's Vnukovo's hourly passenger throughput was around 2000 people adding up to a daily total of 40,000 people, whereas the current number of passengers the Airport handles annually stands at an imposing 10 million plus. In 1978 Vnukovo's legal status was upped to that of the Vnukovo Industrial Association. (VIA)" / 'Civil Aviation Journal', Volume 11 (p.8), 1979. He continues: "Life has presented us with a range of new challenges, most of them to do with the upcoming Olympics and to any passenger the Airport must seem more like a gigantic, humming construction site these days." The Airport's major renovation program is in full swing by now, being implemented by the Aeroproject Research Institute and the Construction Trust Company # 29 of the Glavmosstroï (the Moscow Head Office for Construction). Two major service areas are being set apart in the terminals to separate major passenger flows, namely those of arrivals and departures.

Both of these areas are being equipped with state-of-the-art electronic flight information and public address systems for announcements about check-in, boarding, and flight status, availability of tickets, etc. Baggage handling and claim procedures are undergoing extensive automation as well. More spacious and comfortable passenger waiting areas complete with nurseries are being introduced. Public catering offer has been expanded with the dining outlets now seating up to 200 persons simultaneously and new cafes and buffets opening regularly. Very handily there is also a long distance call center, an automatic combination-lock-based luggage storage facility with

a total of eight thousand lockers on the new terminal's first level.

The events that followed showed clearly that the Airport's top management and staff achieved what they had originally set out to do, namely ensure quality and smooth air service provision during the XXII Olympics.

Maintaining its proud stance of the Union's leading airport, Vnukovo had always been at the forefront of airport technology innovations developed in-house, and a true pioneer in the introduction into service of new aircraft types.

The Airport's throughput increased to 4200 pax. per hour, and its numerous facilities, cargo terminal included, grew in size and added capacity considerably. Six standalone docking stands were added to the cargo facility and the renovation of RWY 1 was brought to completion. Aircraft stands grew both in number and total area to enable better ground handling and commercial servicing of aircraft, a brand-new computing facility was commissioned.

The lengths the Airport had been willing to go to in developing its automated air traffic control and flight radio-support systems allowed the State Aviation Register of the USSR to issue a Certificate of Conformity allowing Vnukovo to commence ICAO Category I and II flight operations as early as July 20, 1979.

The Vnukovo-based aircraft fleet's renewal also continued apace with new, more comfortable and productive aircraft types added regularly. The incremental renovation and retrofitting of the airfield included installation of more advanced ATC, take-off and landing guidance and control systems based on the new-generation computing technology.

It should be noted that both during the 50s and the 60s and onward the Airport was handling the entire volume of international passenger traffic. The airport staff possessed a great deal of experience in that respect and the experience tended to be preserved thanks to low personnel turnover.

For a long while prior to the opening of a new passenger terminal at Sheremetyevo and that of the all-new Domodedovo Airport, all the flights carrying foreign tourists over the territories of Siberia, the Russian Far East, the European North of Russia and to Leningrad operated from Vnukovo just like the flights to the Baltic republics, the Ukraine,

Belorussia, Moldova and to all the Transcaucasian republics. Up to two hundred round trip flights were being made out of Vnukovo daily at the time. Aerflot's services were popular among such renowned tour operators as Intourist, Sputnik, the Friendship Societies' Union, the Peace Protection Committee and other public organizations of note. An absolute hit among foreign guests was the route to Leningrad with ten to twelve daily schedules operated on it during the summer months. Closely following it in terms of popular demand were the schedules to Kiev, Minsk, Chisinau, Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Baku, Samarkand, Tashkent.

To be continued..

Some of the material contained in the book **Vnukovo Airport, Air Transport Publishers, 2001, Moscow**, was used during the writing of the present article.



The author wishes to thank Messrs. Transport Publishers for the kindly granted permission to use the abovementioned material.

Translated by Maxim A. Mikhailov, PJSC Vnukovo Airport, 2005.

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