

# FLIGHT SAFETY FOUNDATION— INTERNATIONAL IS 20

**From its birth in the last years of the U.S.S.R., FSF-I advanced to hosting the International Air Safety Seminar.**

BY VALERY SHELKOVNIKOV AND DMITRI TARASEVICH

**T**he life of an organization, like that of a person, should not be viewed apart from the social and political periods to which they belong.

At the end of the 1980s, perestroika and glasnost became powerful influences on the course of events in our society. After dozens of years behind the “Iron Curtain,” our society began to move more freely than before, and international contacts multiplied. At the same time, the aviation community, as with society in general, felt something unseen and unknown coming.

But only the people at the top knew that serious problems were at hand. Oil prices were plummeting, and the state budget was in great disarray. Many thought that state flight safety programs were facing a financial guillotine. Aviators concerned with safety were writing letters of alarm to Mikhail Gorbachev, then premier of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), but they received only formal replies.

Despite these concerns, other actions were at work. The Soviet government sent a delegation to the United States to discuss with the State Department and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) the possibility of commencing operations from North America to Southeast Asia via routes over the U.S.S.R. If this possibility could be realized, the world of international air traffic would

be changed dramatically, with great reductions in en route time and cost.

It so happened that while those of us in the delegation were in New York City, visiting the FAA air route traffic control center, we met John Enders, president and chief executive officer of Flight Safety Foundation (FSF). An engaging and experienced engineer, air safety expert and former aviator, John briefed us on how the independent Foundation originated in 1947 and subsequently expanded its operations to enhance flight safety worldwide. He encouraged us to consider this as a model for the U.S.S.R. in addressing aviation safety challenges.

After returning to Moscow, we shared the idea of setting up a similar organization with prominent

FSF-I awards ceremony at Petrovsky Palace, Moscow, 1997.  
Standing: Valery Shelkovnikov, FSF-I president.



figures in Soviet aviation. Ivan Mashkivskiy, chairman of the State Safety Oversight Agency; Tatiana Anodina, head of one of the principal research and development institutes; Air Force Maj. Gen. Alexey Mayorov, Premier Gorbachev's chief pilot; Air Force Col.-Gen. Ivan Modiaev, First Deputy Air Force General Staff; Gennady Bocharov, prominent journalist and member of the Writers Union; and many others enthusiastically supported this idea. It seems that some had nurtured similar thoughts for many years.

All of them joined a new steering committee that was set up to devise a way of bringing these ideas to reality. Everybody understood that:

First, even the most developed state aviation system is not in a position to cover the entire spectrum of problems;

Second, state organizations are not flexible and proactive enough; and,

Third, state personnel, being dependent on numerous other government bodies, may not demonstrate independent, objective and unbiased approaches to developing permanent safety solutions.

Our lawyers quickly advised us of the difficulties we faced in forming such an organization. There was no law in the U.S.S.R. that would allow for the creation of a public organization. Somebody told us that even the powerful Communist Party, as a de facto "public organization," had been illegally functioning for more than 70 years; life was not simple. It was Gennady Alferenko,

a young, joyful and adventurous character, and president of the Social Innovation Foundation of the U.S.S.R., who provided us with a means of achieving our goals. In love with aviation, he promptly helped us to draft papers necessary for joining his Foundation under the name "Association Flight Safety Foundation U.S.S.R. (AFSF-USSR)" and his huge official stamp breathed life into our organization. We were the ninth group existing under his approval umbrella. After that, no matter whether public organization legislation existed in the U.S.S.R., we were allowed to open bank accounts.

The principal goals of our new organization were almost 100 percent modeled on the Flight Safety Foundation as described to us by John Enders. We undertook to communicate safety information; award aviators for heroism, bravery and resourcefulness; advocate flight safety and international experience; hold international flight safety workshops; and perform other initiatives to instruct our nation's aviation personnel and inform the international community about Soviet aviation.

The first person to react to media information about our new association was Anna Pavlovna Smirnova. She wrote: "My sons, accept three rubles in the enclosed envelope. I am retired and that is all I can do for you. Fight for flight safety. My only son was killed in an air accident."

After reading this message, we realized in our hearts the serious responsibility we had taken upon our shoulders.

Cooperation with the Foundation had become our priority. Unique information on accident prevention from the Foundation was disseminated among our corporate members. We organized a number of joint international flight safety workshops, awarded Russian aviators both with the Association's and FSF's awards. Helicopter test pilot Anatoly Grischenko was the first Russian to receive the highly esteemed FSF Heroism Award, the Gravierin Sword, for his rescue operations at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident site in Ukraine. The award was presented posthumously to his wife at Flight Safety Foundation's International Air Safety Seminar in 1990. Innokenty Tsvilev, a Mil Mi-8

Alexander Neradko, director of Russian Federation Air Navigation Authority (left), with Stuart Matthews, FSF president and CEO, Moscow ALAR workshop, 2003.



## Afterword

Shelkovnikov and Tarasevich's comprehensive account of FSF-I's beginning and growth noted the influence and support of Flight Safety Foundation (FSF) in nurturing FSF-I. Here's how it happened:

In 1980, FSF's board of governors wanted to broaden the organization's membership. It then stood at about 150 organizations, but all were outside the Communist Bloc. Since the FSF charter called for fostering the safety of civil air transportation worldwide, that implied sharing operational safety information and practices among all operators. Efforts began to bring the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China (CAAC) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) Ministry of Aviation into dialogue with the Foundation through our seminars, forums and publications, and to share knowledge and lessons learned with them.

Correspondence began in 1982 with the U.S.S.R. minister of aviation, Marshal Bugayev, as well as with the CAAC through its New York office. We invited each to send representatives to FSF international seminars and become acquainted with our work, aiming to bring them into full membership. Neither the U.S.S.R. nor China well understood the Foundation's charter as an independent, non-government and non-profit international organization, or its mode

of operation. Meanwhile, we sent complimentary copies of our safety bulletins to both CAAC and the U.S.S.R.

The Internet did not exist at the time. Eventually, a teletype reply arrived from Marshal Bugayev. Soon, the U.S.S.R. sent two representatives, Nicolai Safranov of the State Supervisory Committee and Yuri Kostev of the Gromov Flight Research Institute, to our 1988 International Occupant Safety Conference and Workshop in Arlington, Virginia, U.S. We had intensive discussions with them about the Foundation's organization and operation.

A Soviet air traffic control delegation led by Valery Shelkovnikov was visiting the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at the time of our conference, and Safranov and Kostev briefed Shelkovnikov about the Foundation on their return flight to the U.S.S.R.

Shortly, we received a message from Sergei Tcheremnykh, on behalf of Shelkovnikov, that began mutually supportive efforts by suggesting a meeting, facilitated by the FAA, at the New York Terminal Radar Approach Control. We described our organization, means of funding, collaborative information exchange with members, feedback through industry advisory committees and other administrative matters, hoping it would serve as a template for them.

Soviet participation in our seminars began with our 1989 42nd international seminar in Athens, where Drs. Krylyk and Mirinov presented a paper on catastrophic risk. Russian delegations have attended and participated in our seminars ever since.

In 1990, FSF General Counsel Bob Gray and I met with senior Russian aviation experts and visited many departments and institutions in Moscow and Leningrad to explain the FSF concept and to urge Soviet support for their own fledgling foundation.

Our subsequent visits included lectures to officials, students and industry leaders about aviation safety and how it was practiced in the West, emphasizing that we would provide help as they proceeded with their own approaches to safety improvement, and eventually in joint sponsorship of safety colloquies and workshops throughout the new Commonwealth of Independent States.

Stuart Matthews, FSF president and CEO, and I maintained vigorous support of and cooperation with our FSF-I friends, which continues under the current president and CEO, William R. Voss.

— John Enders

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transport helicopter flight engineer, was the second Russian recipient, in 1997.

These activities made the Association highly visible in the aviation community, and drew support from industry, government and individuals. The number of corporate members quickly grew to 100.

The first Association revenue was used to disseminate more than 1,000 copies of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) *Accident Prevention Manual* among Russian aviation

organizations. We knew that only about 50 copies of this vitally important report describing modern concepts and accident prevention methods had been sent to Russia from ICAO headquarters, and could be found only on the desks and bookshelves of the "big shots," while those who vitally needed this information, the operations personnel, were deprived of it. That is why we considered this move as a type of "missionary" work aimed at enlarging the circle of like-minded persons

and raising safety awareness among them. As a result, many aviators began to speak our common safety language and, more importantly, to apply the principles it described.

In 1990, responding to a request of the Federation of Amateur Pilots of the U.S.S.R., our Association organized and led a seven-light-plane formation flight over an adventurous and challenging route: Moscow-Siberia-Alaska-Canada-Seattle and return to Moscow. The

flight was a success and took a month and a half. Our purpose was to attain some familiarity with U.S. general aviation activities. Although the flight was sponsored by Russian businessman and amateur pilot Grigory Komarenko, without the assistance rendered by our friend and former FAA administrator, the late U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Donald D. Engen, we would never have been able to make it.

His authority helped us to solve all the problems of coordination with U.S.-Canadian North American Aerospace Defense Command systems in order for us to be able to cross the U.S.S.R.-U.S. border in the Bering Strait area. Later he demonstrated to us the democratic approach to airspace use. We had never seen such freedom of operations, even in Europe.

In October 1991, a “miracle” happened. The first deputy to the Minister of Jurisdiction granted registration documents to our organization. We were overwhelmed with joy! We had become a legitimate organization in the eyes of the government. As far as we know, it was some time later that the powerful Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. was similarly registered!

On Dec. 8, 1991, the U.S.S.R. collapsed. In 1993, miraculously, the shelling of Parliament and attempted coup did not end in disaster. In 1998, we saw financial default. Not only were private persons within our corporate membership victimized, but institutions were badly affected. But we followed author Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s admonition: “Do not trust, do not be scared, do not ask for a favor,” and continued to work.

We were not afraid of contacting people at the top and criticizing, and we never took a single ruble from the state budget. Every year we organized the

awards ceremony for aviators from the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.) member states. Together with ICAO, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Foundation and the FAA, we continued holding workshops and disseminating unique materials pertaining to international flight safety experience. In cooperation with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS), we established a similar voluntary reporting system.

Finnair became the first international airline to join our Association, making a significant contribution by supporting flight safety workshops, including those in Finland. The Anglo-

**We had become a legitimate organization in the eyes of the government.**

Continental Education Group in England contributed heavily to the training of Russian and C.I.S. aviators and air traffic control personnel in English language proficiency, later joining our organization. Our Association’s chairmen and the members of our board of governors exercised wisdom as their decisions and initiatives contributed to stable and efficient operations through many years of safety enhancements in this country. We cannot overestimate the important role in flight safety promotion played by the *Civil Aviation* magazine, the *AviaSoyuz* magazine, and the *Vozdushny Transport* newspaper.

Tirelessly, John Enders traveled all over the U.S.S.R. and C.I.S., lecturing on the most pressing issues of accident prevention and safety management.

Ten years later, taking due account of their inputs into establishing our

organization, we decided to elect Enders the Association’s honorary president and Mashkivskiy as chairman emeritus.

With Enders’s retirement from the Foundation, a new and energetic successor president, Stuart Matthews, continued an excellent relationship with us, did a lot to improve it and suggested that the Association should be an FSF “sister organization.” This initiative considerably enlarged our international contacts aimed at information exchange.

Recently, William R. Voss, succeeding Matthews, continued the cooperation.

We held extremely important international workshops at the beginning of the 21st century to discuss the FSF *ALAR Tool Kit* and controlled flight into terrain workshops designed to combat the principal “killers in aviation.”

The FSF 58th annual International Air Safety Seminar in Moscow in November 2005, a joint meeting of the Foundation, IATA and the International Federation of Airworthiness, became a high point of our activities. Despite a cold and frozen Moscow, the theme “Safety Is Everybody’s Business” attracted about 500 participants.

Our cooperation with the Foundation goes on. Bill Voss often comes to Russia to organize and take part in important conferences. His messages in *AeroSafety World* are translated into Russian and have become very popular among the Russian aviation community.

The international financial crisis we currently face is an opportunity for clever and talented people to demonstrate their abilities. Understanding this, we shall survive and continue our efforts to enhance aviation safety. ➤

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