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### **Information about the most famous AN-2 plane in the world.**

#### **THE KING OF ANTONOV'S**

The AN-2 plane is unique in the history of world aviation. It was the plane whose serial production lasted the longest. Since the first test flight in 1947 the production continued uninterrupted until 1989. The total number of the planes produced amounted to 18,000. It is currently estimated that there are still about 180 AN-2s flying all over the world. It is the last real plane for real aviators.

The AN-2 is the largest and the most beautiful biplane in the world. It was produced in various versions and options and flew over all continents – even Antarctica. The plane of thousands of applications was suitable for various purposes but not for distant, intercontinental flights. Its cruising speed of about 185 km/hour and coverage up to 1,000 kilometres excluded such a possibility.

However, the courage and determination of many great aviators enabled several amazing, distant flights with this type of plane.

In the 1970s, a few Polish pilots from an agricultural aviation company (ZUA) in Mielec flew from Poland to Brazil over the South Atlantic. Between 1995 and 1997 some Polish and American pilots flew several times with the AN-2 from Poland to the USA and Canada over the North Atlantic.

There was also a case of redeploying the AN-2 from Poland to Australia and from Poland to Venezuela along the northern route via Iceland, Canada and the USA to South America. There are detailed documents of a flight with the AN-2 from the USA to Europe over the North Pole made by a fantastic pilot and enthusiast of Antonov, Ron Sheardown, from Alaska. It is believed that Ron Sheardown broke the record of the longest airborne stay of the AN-2 plane.

Little is known of the achievements of the Russian aviators within operating the AN-2 planes in the polar regions and in Antarctica.

However, it was not until 1997 that a Polish team consisting of Waldemar Miskurka (the captain), Andrzej Szymański (the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot) and Bogdan Gajek (the flight engineer) managed to complete the only - so far - flight around the world with the AN-2.

The flight began on 22 July and ended on 21 October 1997. The flight covered almost 36,000 km. The crew landed in 31 airports in 16 countries. They spent 188 hours and 2 minutes airborne. The flight was full of dramatic events. The exhaust manifold failed in Iran, the MI-24 gunship accompanied the plane during its flight over Afghanistan, it was necessary to repair the oil cooler in Thailand, and when flying over the China Sea the crew found themselves in the centre of a typhoon. The authorities of China did not permit the flight over the territory of the country, so the crew was forced to change their flight path. A critical stage in the history of the flight was the one from Petropavlovsk to St. Paul. It took a long time for the Russian generals to decide whether to permit the flight – along a straight line – over the Pacific or not. Only flying near the Russian military bases in the Far East provided the chance for reaching Alaska.

The whole story had a happy ending, and after an 11-hour flight the crew landed in St. Paul.

## **The History of the Plane**

The AN-2 plane selected for the flight had the serial number 1G 178-08 and a Polish marking SP-DLA. It was a factory plane model of the Polish Aviation Factory in Mielec. The year of production: 1978. When it began its flight around the world it was already 19 years old. The plane and its engine had already undergone the first repair.

The whole history of the aircraft between its production year and 1997 is not clear, but it is known, for instance, that the plane was used in 1989 by the Special Services of Communist Poland to drop propaganda leaflets over the Shipyard in Gdańsk during the strikes. At this time Lech Wałęsa, the head of the "Solidarity" movement, was also the strike leader.

The plane was then marked SP-OLA and was apparently meant to take part in historic events.

After completing a flight around the world, the plane participated in various aviation shows both in Poland and in Europe.

In 2001, I bought the plane from the Polish Aviation Factory in Mielec, and the repair began. It was done at EADS ZUA (Agroaviation Services Plant) in Mielec, the best AN-2 renovation plant in the world. The plant has PART 145 regulations. In 2007, a general engine overhaul was carried out. Since our company has one of the largest stocks of spare parts for the AN-2 in the world, all major elements of the plane influencing flight safety were changed during the repair. The purpose of the repair was to use the plane for further record flights. At the moment, the plane is based at the airport in Rzeszów (EPRZ).

The plane owner's intention is to organise the next record mission of the aircraft, e.g. a flight around the world across the two Poles.

If you are interested in my proposal, or in any other ways of using this unique and exceptional plane, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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