



Belavia National Airline ready to work under fair conditions with any international air carriers

Only healthy competition offers advantages to the best



Security of passengers is paramount for all air carriers

The aviation market is currently the scene of hot debate, with inter-departmental disputes almost leading to flights ceasing between Minsk and Moscow. An agreement is yet to be reached regarding the number of flights — two or three — to be offered by Russian Aeroflot.

By Dmitry Umpirovich

The position of Belarus is quite clear, as Belavia has no wish to allow its Russian rival to dominate such a popular route. Aeroflot is keen to make Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport its major transport hub, while attracting passengers from 'third states'. By offering more daily flights, connecting flights become more convenient and the schedule gains more flexibility. Clearly, a compromise is needed: one that satisfies passengers' need for security, comfort and a good price, rather than commercial wrangles. It hardly matters which air company provides flights but good quality is only ensured

where competition is permitted to exist.

"Belavia is ready for competition," asserts the leadership of the national air carrier. "This is primarily proven by the presence of a significant number of international air companies in Belarus."

Minsk is cur-

rently served by Lot (Polish Airlines), Etihad Airways, Austrian Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa — which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary of launching flights from Frankfurt to Minsk. A German Boeing first touched down at Minsk National Airport on March 29th, 1992, with flights routed through Estonian Tallinn three times a

week. Now, there are ten direct flights a week, while the number of transported passengers reached 0.5 million people.

There are many factors influencing competitiveness on the aviation market. Firstly, a convenient schedule offers optimal connecting flights to destinations around the world. Those carriers offering several daily flights benefit customers most: Belavia flies from Minsk to Moscow's Domodedovo four times a day; Aeroflot flies from Moscow Sheremetyevo to Minsk three times a day; and Austrian Airlines performs two daily flights from Vienna to Minsk.

Secondly, passengers seek modern planes to ensure a comfortable journey. Aeroflot sometimes uses its new Sukhoi Superjets on its flight to Minsk, while Lufthansa uses the contemporary Embraer-195 (a Brazilian aircraft direct from the factory). Belavia is purchasing similar planes in autumn. From Frankfurt, you can travel to any corner of the world on the acclaimed Airbus A380 or on the longest plane worldwide: the Boeing 747-8. Meanwhile, passengers respond well to loyalty programmes which encourage frequent fliers, rewarding them with discounts on future flights.

"For our 20th anniversary, we've prepared a range of surprises for our passengers," noted Joachim Brumbach, Lufthansa's

General Manager in Belarus, at a recent press conference. "I primarily refer to our campaign organised from early March to late May: we're offering a raffle for two return tickets to Frankfurt, with one night's stay in a five star city hotel. Moreover, special prices will be available throughout the year on long haul routes. We're currently working out variants with China. We've noticed that relations between this country and Belarus are developing well, with many students arriving to study at Belarusian universities. We also want to offer Belarusian students special terms for summer flights to the USA. The quality of our meals and entertainment on board may also attract some passengers. Importantly, we mustn't rest on our laurels; we need to keep improving our service. For instance, last year, Belavia reached the milestone of flying one million passengers."

"Our expectations for the Belarusian market have definitely been met," Mr. Brumbach added. "Eastern Europe was the most successful direction for Lufthansa's global network in 2011 although the aviation industry is facing serious problems across the continent. We



Twenty years ago, German Lufthansa launched regular flights from Frankfurt to Minsk

reached a new record this year, by transporting over 2m passengers across Russia and the CIS — up 25 percent on the previous year."