

Jet Airliner Tu-104

(From a Delhi Correspondent)

THE Russian jet airliner Tu-104, named after its designer Andrei N Tupolev, passed through Delhi on its way to Rangoon. It was on a proving flight in preparation for the forthcoming Olympic Games in Melbourne, where it will be carrying the Soviet teams.

The Tu-104 created quite a stir in the Western world when it carried the Russian Security Chief, Gen Ivan Serov, to London, prior to the visit of Messrs Bulganin and Krushchev early this year. At that time, no details about the plane were let out and the secrecy maintained gave rise to a lot of speculation. Since then, the aircraft has been offered for sale, and therefore more information is available, but not all of it. In Delhi, large crowds turned up to have a look at it. The rush was great and the arrangements to handle the crowd were so inadequate that there were even a couple of ambulance cases.

The plane is very pretty to look at, with its sleek and clean lines and very good polish. Looking at it from the outside, the side view of the fuselage reminds one of the so-to-speak curved sweep of the graceful Super-Constellation, but there is no similarity really. There are two enormous jet engines immediately on each side of the fuselage, estimated to be 40 ft long and 5 ft at maximum diameter, with the exhaust end angled away from the fuselage to protect it from the jet blast. The total length of the aircraft is approximately 120 ft (Super-Constellation 113 ft 7 in), and the wing span about 118 ft. The wings are quite thick and swept back more than 30 degrees. The tail fin is about 33 ft high. The undercarriage is of the four-wheel double truck type; the two-wheel nose gear is steerable from the cockpit and the two rear wheels of the main landing gear swivel, so parking manoeuvres can be made in limited space. The tremendous number of rivets catches one's eye, and if one strolls past the undercarriage, one is reminded of the better finish seen elsewhere. The mechanically minded find their attention attracted by the large number of aeriels visible all over, and wonder what electronic equipment is carried aboard.

The Tu-104 has a first class and

a tourist version, and the one we saw from inside is the former type. On entering, on the right are three toilets and washrooms, with different types of fittings, for the passengers. On the left is the main passenger cabin with 28 seats. There are four seats in each row with a corridor in the middle. The seats are covered with a bluish woollen fabric and white anti-maccassars, and are very roomy and comfortable. Moving forward, we come to a row of four special cabins. The first is a lounge with four double seats and two dining tables; the next, a cafe-bar with two double seats, a dining table, buffet and galley. This compartment is directly over the wings and is slightly higher than the rest. The third is a lounge with two double seats and a dining table on one side and two swivelling chairs and a dining table on the other. The last is a lounge with four double seats and

two dining tables. Lace is used to decorate the lounges and there are glass show cases containing porcelain figurines separating the lounges (the figurines are screwed down on to the plate glass and there is no cause for anxiety!). The windows are framed with what appears to be wood but is actually plastic painted to look like wood. The dining tables in the lounges are also finished with this type of plastic.

Leaving the lounges behind, you now step through an airtight door which keeps the lounges and the main passenger cabin pressurised, even if the cockpit is depressurised. Through this door, then, one steps into a forward vestibule for the crew, past a toilet for them, into the flight deck. One first passes the flight engineer and the radio operator who sit in backward facing seats, and then the two pilots seats, with complete duplication of instruments for each. One then climbs down into the navigator's seat in the nose which is fully transparent. There is radar for both weather and navigation.

There are two capacious holds under the cabin floors fore and aft of the wings which can carry upto 5500 lbs of baggage. The whole fuselage is pressurised to correspond to an altitude of 7900 ft to 9850 ft, for cruising between 33,000 ft to 40,000 ft (as against 20,000 ft for Super-Constellation). In addition, oxygen masks are fitted to every seat. A brake parachute is carried in the rear of the fuselage, behind the retractable tail skid.

The greatest amount of speculation is about the power of the engines, the thrust of which is rated by various experts as being anything between 12,000 lbs and 20,000 lbs. The fuel capacity is estimated at about 8,000 Imperial gallons.

Some Other Data

First class: 50 seats and payload 11,400 to 13,200 lbs.

Tourist: 70 seats and payload 15,400 to 16,500 lbs.

Maximum speed 620 mph; Cruising speed 500 to 560 mph.

Maximum range 2800 to 3100 miles.

Cruising altitude 33,000 ft to 40,000 ft.

Take-off run 4,600 ft to 5,260 ft; landing run 3,620 ft to 2,050 ft



"He who is firmly seated
in authority soon learns
to think security."

J. R. Lowell.

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