

Regrettably, figuratively speaking, today one esteems more a “yes sir” pilot “trimmer”, than a pilot persona. At the same time one should admit that pilots (aircrew) usually respond positively to both fair and unfair reprimands. However, the ace flyer is ‘spiritually’ and feels deeply insulted when his motivations are misunderstood, especially when ground personnel cannot share his ‘spiritual’ need of air autonomy. Behavioural independence is the individual manifestation of the flyer’s persona.

Thus the ‘knot’ of complex controversies is tied, which the flyer must untie in an emergency situation when alone in the sky. In practice, the aircrew is well founded and legally dependent on all his training for safety. However in an emergency situation the pilot is very reliable when he can be independent. Probably it was not by accident that Russian flyer Michael Gromov, founder of the Flying Testing Institute at Zhukovsky, fought for the right of the flyer to be creative and independent. He repeatedly stated that independent flying and thinking is a must.

Mandatory prerequisites for such independence are love of flying, professionalism, competency, good cultural lifestyle, and self-improvement as a human and a flyer. My life experience and research have convinced me that the psychological factor of independence stimulates creative individuality, a natural gift of the flyer, with high aims, and high morals. However, socially, the life-philosophy of flying safety has always been inflexible: individuality generates individualism, the positive role of which is very questionable. Frequently, in evaluating flying safety, we have all come up with opposite results.

I have encountered this dilemma for the first time as the senior flight surgeon of the 382nd Air Defence Fighter Regiment. Since what follows concerns my personal experience and people who I trust with great value, I will attempt to be mostly exact. I will write about the social and psychological specifics, a flying safety time period covering about 30 years of aviation (1962-1992). In considering human states of the soul and conscience under routine and emergency flight conditions, I stumbled on a serious moral problem i.e., the proper meaning of the word truth in Air Force aviation. I write to the esteem of only those who are worthy of it, to recognise malingering hypocrisy, and bootlickers. Unfortunately, life and Air Force aviation in all its 'greatness' can frequently be a 'let down' because of deception, injustice, and power abuse. It would be naive and hasty to portray myself

as a truth-seeker, a fighter for a 'pure sky', a defender of the rights for the flyer, etc. In aviation, truth is the runway, it may be short, long, illuminated, darkened, warm or ice coated. The truth is complex – it is objective and subjective, it is your pride in your shame. Truth is created in the history of the aircraft and the flyers. Therefore I will try to write only that which I saw with my own eyes, what I did eyewitness myself, and, more precisely, what I experienced as a participant. I will attempt to be honest and kind about my years in the Air Force, which is still carrying on and growing. I hope these words create in the flyers the special state of soul, which is called "flying". This reminds me of the Bible when God punished the serpent for trickery by forbidding it to fly. And this is not just a metaphor, but a painful conviction I have reached i.e., that "flying" is a specific spiritual state, invisibly supported by the space energy of living matter in the universe. More about this later. The different parts of my book will cover the history of my life in the Air Force. I am convinced that independence means the right of not being afraid of the pronoun "I". "I" in aviation means responsibility and honour. My reminiscences about service in regiment are not 'fiction', since they are directly related to the flying safety problem as a special cross of the flyer's life.