

Sebastian Schmitz: The Life and Legacy of an Interflug East Germany Airline Pilot

Sebastian Schmitz was a legendary pilot who flew for Interflug, the national airline of East Germany. His career spanned four decades, during which he witnessed firsthand the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War, and the German reunification. Schmitz's life was marked by both triumph and tragedy, but his passion for aviation never wavered.



Interflug: East Germany's Airline : Sebastian Schmitz

by What She Said Stitches

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Early Life and Career

Sebastian Schmitz was born on January 1, 1934, in Dresden, Germany. He grew up in a time of great political and social upheaval, as the Nazi regime came to power and World War II ravaged Europe. Despite the challenges of his youth, Schmitz developed a deep love for aviation at an early age. After the war, he joined the East German Air Force, where he trained as a pilot.

In 1958, Schmitz joined Interflug, the newly formed national airline of East Germany. He quickly rose through the ranks, becoming a captain in just a few years. Schmitz flew on a variety of aircraft for Interflug, including the Ilyushin Il-18, Tupolev Tu-134, and Airbus A310.

The Berlin Airlift and the Cold War

Schmitz's career as a pilot was heavily influenced by the Cold War. In 1948, the Soviet Union blockaded West Berlin, cutting off land and air access to the city. The United States and its allies responded with the Berlin Airlift, a massive airlift operation that supplied West Berlin with food, fuel, and other essential supplies.

Schmitz played a vital role in the Berlin Airlift, flying numerous missions into and out of the besieged city. He often flew at night, dodging Soviet searchlights and anti-aircraft fire. Schmitz's bravery and dedication helped to keep West Berlin alive during the blockade.

The German Reunification

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, marking the beginning of the end of the Cold War. East Germany and West Germany were reunited in 1990, and Interflug was merged into Lufthansa, the national airline of West Germany.

Schmitz continued to fly for Lufthansa until his retirement in 1994. He finished his career with an unblemished safety record, having flown over 20,000 hours in the air.

Legacy

Sebastian Schmitz was a true pioneer of aviation. He flew for Interflug during some of the most turbulent times in German history, and he always

put the safety of his passengers and crew first. Schmitz's legacy as a pilot and a leader continues to inspire aspiring aviators around the world.

In 2004, Schmitz was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his contributions to aviation and to the German reunification. He died in 2017 at the age of 83.

Sebastian Schmitz was a remarkable pilot who witnessed firsthand some of the most important events of the 20th century. His life and career were marked by both triumph and tragedy, but his passion for aviation never wavered. Schmitz's legacy as a pilot and a leader continues to inspire aspiring aviators around the world.



- **Born:** January 1, 1934, Dresden, Germany
- **Died:** 2017

- **Airline:** Interflug
- **Aircraft flown:** Ilyushin Il-18, Tupolev Tu-134, Airbus A310
- **Awards:** Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany



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