

# THE BETRAYAL OF CONCORDE

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BY

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On June 26, 1988, a newly-delivered Air France Airbus A320 aircraft (F-GFKC) approached Mulhouse-Habsheim/MLH Airport, France, to perform a low level fly-by as part of an air show. The aircraft did not maintain sufficient airspeed, and descended through 100 feet (30m) to 30 feet (10m) above the runway. Then, it struck trees near the end of the runway and crashed into the adjacent forest. Three passengers of the 130 passengers and crew on board were killed. The final results under French criminal law were dramatic: the Captain, his First Officer, two Air France officials and the President of the Flying Club were all charged with involuntary manslaughter. All were found guilty, with the Captain being sentenced to 6 months in prison plus 12 months' probation; the others were sentenced to probation. (The crew disputed the proper functioning of both the altimeter and the throttles, to little avail in the official accident report.)

On the day of the crash, the Head of the Minister of Transport's Cabinet was Jean-Cyril Spinetta.

On January 20, 1992, an Air Inter Airbus A320 aircraft (F-GGED) was descending toward Strasbourg-Entzheim/SXB Airport after a routine flight from Lyon/LYS. The crew improperly configured a poorly-designed Flight Control Unit (FCU), resulting in an overly-steep descent through cloud cover. As the aircraft was not equipped with a Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS), there was no automatic warning of the error. The aircraft struck a mountain, killing 87 of the 96 passengers and crew. More than fourteen years later, six French aviation officials (including top Air France and AIRBUS executives) were charged with involuntary manslaughter as a result of the crash. On November 17, 2006, both Air France and AIRBUS were found liable for this crash, but all six officials were cleared of criminal responsibility. As Air France had already paid damages of Euros 21

million to the families of those killed in the crash, the remaining paperwork dealt with how much of that loss AIRBUS' insurers would be compelled to reimburse to Air France's insurers.

On the day of the crash, the Chairman and CEO of Air Inter was Jean-Cyril Spinetta.

Thus were sown the seeds that led directly to the premature retirement of Concorde, at least a decade before this would have been technically necessary, on October 24, 2003. The saga of the secret betrayal of Concorde by senior executives at both Air France (AF) and British Airways (BA), and the secret collusion between the Chairman of Air France and the President of AIRBUS to ensure that AF would not have to suffer the "loss of face" that would ensue from its unilaterally retiring its Concorde fleet, thereby leaving BA with a monopoly on supersonic transatlantic passenger service, is a nasty litany of hypocrisy, cowardice and "corporate politics." It is long overdue, as we shall soon pass the fourteenth anniversary of Concorde's premature retirement, that the facts be revealed.

Jean-Cyril Spinetta is a top-level French government bureaucrat from the prestigious *Ecole Nationale d'Administration*. Born in 1943, he served in several French government Ministries before becoming Head of the Minister of Transport's Cabinet from 1988-1990. In 1990, he was named Chairman and CEO of Air Inter, the government-owned French domestic airline that was merged into Air France in 1997, and ran it until 1993. After serving as a personal adviser to the French President, in the European Commission and in several more Ministries, his big break arrived in September, 1997, when he was named Chairman and CEO of Air France. On January 1, 2009, he was "kicked upstairs" as Chairman-only, and Pierre-Henri Gourgeon succeeded him as AF CEO. He retired on July 1, 2013: one year before reaching the age of 70, at which time this would have become mandatory.

As an aviation enthusiast since I saw the first BOAC Comet 4 aircraft leave Idlewild Airport/IDL, New York for London/LHR, on October 4, 1958, I decided to begin chartering Concorde in 1985. My first charter, from Miami/MIA to Aruba/AUA and return on November 16-17, 1985, with BA Concorde G-BOAG, was such a consummate thrill that I later proceeded to operate two *all-supersonic* Around-The-World luxury Concorde tours with G-BOAF, from April 1-23, 1989 and March 14-April 7, 1990. Numerous official International Aeronautical Federation (FAI) world air speed records were set by these three flights, all going to the pilots (as they should do), but an Around-The-World speed record remained a tantalizing prize. Then, after months of discussions, AF Chairman and CEO Bernard Attali gave his personal approval for AF to operate a Concorde world air speed record flight Westbound Around-The-World, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' first New World landing on October 12, 1492. Ironically, this was the suggestion of a top BA Marketing executive, as BA refused to charter me one of its Concorde for this purpose, citing "potential embarrassment" should a mechanical delay occur *en route*. AF Concorde F-BTSD performed flawlessly on this epic flight, with six refueling stops, from October 12-13, 1992. I named the flight "SUNCHASER ONE", as the sun literally never set

on the entire 32 hour 49 minute 3 second journey from Lisbon/LIS back to Lisbon/LIS. M. Attali stood smiling on the Lisbon/LIS ramp to welcome us back with the new world record.

On August 15-16, 1995, again with M. Attali's total support and encouragement, the same AF Concorde beat her own Westbound record by flying the companion Eastbound Around-The-World journey in just 31 hours 27 minutes 49 seconds. This record remains THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS' entry for the fastest circumnavigation of the Earth (not counting astronaut Commander Tom Stafford's May, 1969 APOLLO X spacecraft record), and it will last for decades in the absence of a worthy successor to Concorde.

For details on both of these two landmark Concorde achievements, please see *the website*:

**<http://www.concorde-spirit-tours.com>**

By the time of my next AF Concorde charter, an *all-supersonic* circumnavigation of South America (plus a side-trip to Easter Island/IPC) with F-BTSD, from January 8-27, 1999, I discovered to my amazement that the creative enthusiasm of former AF Chairman Bernard Attali had been replaced with a stern edict from new Chairman Jean-Cyril Spinetta:

**"NO SPEED RECORDS"**

**"NO AIR SHOWS"**

The flight was a total success, with 125,000 spectators at what turned out to be the only visit of Concorde to San Jose/SJO, Costa Rica, plus thousands more at the first of only two Concorde visits to Ushuaia/USH, Argentina. And official F.A.I. world air speed records were filed behind M. Spinetta's back, with no notice to the world aviation press. They stand today, as a defiant AF Concorde Operations pilots' protest against M. Spinetta's air-crash paranoia.

Next, I signed a contract with AF for what would have been a spectacular "Millennium" flight, on December 31, 1999. Named "MILLENNIUM IV", we would have greeted the Year 2000 *four times* at midnight, local time, at Paris/CDG; Gander/YQX; Vancouver/YVR and Kona/KOA, Hawaii. Indeed, a "MILLENNIUM VI" flight was theoretically possible, had we chosen to seek authority to operate from Sapporo/CTS, Japan and Novosibersk/OVB, Russia, as well as secure an existing Mach 2 track to overfly Russia. Well-known Japanese intransigence (only two AF Presidential Concorde had ever been allowed to land there, both of which were also allowed to overfly Russia at Mach 2) eliminated this option.

Then, out of the blue, I got a call from the AF Legal Department, informing me that M. Spinetta had personally ordered that my contract be breached by canceling it. As the contractual "boilerplate" contained cancellation loopholes broad enough to enable an AF Boeing 747-400 to taxi through them, I was left with an apology, and with the bitter disappointment that M. Spinetta had chosen to deny aviation history the presence of a signal Concorde event.

My two final Concorde charters, though that fact was unknown to me at the time, were performed with BA Concorde G-BOAD: first, a supersonic Around-The-World charter from October 23-November 14, 1999; then a supersonic circumnavigation of Africa from February 12-March 2, 2000. These two charters turned-out to be BA's final two longhaul Concorde charters as well.

On June 14, 2000, AF approved my request to charter Concorde for a spectacular flight through a total solar eclipse, from Ascension Island to the West African coastline near Luanda, Angola. No other airplane (including a BA Concorde) had ever been inside a total eclipse for more than about seven minutes, but we would be able to do this for over one full hour. Our Captain was to be a dedicated French astronomy buff, assisted in the cockpit by a leading US astronomer. I flew from Paris/CDG to New York/JFK by AF Concorde the next day, with one of my best friends, AF Concorde First Officer Jean Marcot, at the controls.

Jean had flown Concorde for over ten years, refusing several promotions to Captain on subsonic aircraft so that he could continue flying his beloved Concorde. He was also the only AF Concorde pilot to have flown aboard *both* of my Around-The-World world air speed record flights. Forty days later, on July 25, 2000, Jean was killed in the Gonesse, France crash of AF Concorde F-BTSC, while doing his utmost to save the airplane. I shall never forget the last time I saw him, taxiing up to the jetway at JFK while pointing-out to me the magnificent full-length reflection of our Concorde in the Terminal 4 glass wall, with a beaming and proud smile on his face: the diametric opposite of a corporate "bean counter." Jean's funeral packed Besancon Cathedral, France, to which I made a special trip from the USA. *Requiescat in pace, mon ami.*

The story of Concorde's grounding on July 25 (AF) and August 16 (BA), 2000, and the restoration of scheduled (but not most charter) passenger flights on November 7, 2001, is far too long to relate here. Details may be found on the website: <http://www.concordesst.com>. However, given M. Spinetta's painful prior exposure to the Air France and Air Inter A320 crashes of 1988 and 1992, it is highly probable that he would have personally made the decision to immediately retire the AF Concorde fleet following the 2000 Gonesse crash, rather than invest the 25 million Euro cost of the safety modifications required for her to re-enter service, ***were this decision truly up to him alone.*** But, as Concorde was such an indelible symbol of the ultimate in world commercial aviation in both France and the U.K., and as the French government controlled AF, it is highly likely that both he and any politicians supporting such a decision would have been pilloried in the French press and forced by public outcry to resign in disgrace. Yet, with the trauma of a third fatal crash (this time with an ultra-high-profile AF Concorde, just a few miles from his office) wrecking M. Spinetta's peace-of-mind, the stage was now set for the premature removal of Concorde from the world aviation scene. It certainly did not help the adverse early-2003, top-level French political decision on the AF Concorde's premature retirement when French President Jacques Chirac, his wife and party had all been passengers on an Air France Boeing 747-400 that had just landed at Paris/CDG from Tokyo/NRT (following the Chiracs' state visit to Japan) on July 25, 2000, and was sitting on

an adjacent taxiway when AF Concorde F-BTSC came hurtling at it down the takeoff runway at nearly 200 miles per hour, slewing sharply toward it (to the Concorde's left), and missed a collision with it by only twenty feet (the 747-400 Captain's statement to one of my key sources). The highest-profile air crash in history would have had many times its tremendous world impact if a minuscule difference in the AF Concorde's path had also killed the French President and 400-odd passengers on the AF Boeing 747-400, while destroying that airplane as well.

In November, 2002, a French reporter privately told a retired BA executive that there were strong rumors circulating in France that AF planned to retire Concorde "very soon." No word of such French defeatism had reached BA officially, but those very few BA insiders who learned of it began waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Then, on February 19, 2003, AF Concorde F-BTSD was operating the scheduled Paris/CDG-New York/JFK service when a fuel leak was noticed in engine #3. When the crew shut down this engine, it negligently omitted to also turn off the valve controlling fuel flow to it. After suddenly noticing an alarming drop in the remaining fuel, the Captain diverted to Halifax/YHZ for an emergency landing. I was later told that there was not enough fuel on board to even do a go-around at YHZ, and that the aircraft had landed "on the fumes."

Just eight days later, on February 27, 2003, AF Concorde F-BVFA lost part of its rudder during its climb to altitude between Paris/CDG and New York/JFK. The cause was moisture contamination of the rudder's composite material, causing loss of integrity to the structure from freezing and thawing. BA had previously encountered this problem three times, and had elected (under pressure from the UK CAA) to replace all seven rudders in its Concorde fleet while stepping-up hangar inspections of their external surfaces. Though the problem was not serious, as the shredding of the composite material stopped at the metal structure surrounding it and as the rudder was principally used only on the ground, these two AF Concorde incidents proved to be the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back" as to M. Spinetta. In brief, he almost certainly viewed the potential risk of his personal criminal liability under French law in the event of another Concorde crash as outweighing his continued support for this French (and British) national icon.

Air France was preparing to privatize itself at this time, and AIRBUS was similarly run by another elite French bureaucrat: an *Ecole Polytechnique* graduate and protege of French President Jacques Chirac named Noel Forgeard. M. Spinetta reportedly proceeded to hold secret discussions with M. Forgeard, delivering the urgent plea that AIRBUS come up with a "face-saving" way by which Concorde could be retired by AF as soon as possible in order to get any personal criminal liability for future AF Concorde accidents off his back, notwithstanding the facts that the 2000-2001 safety modifications, plus a clear set of future maintenance programs (called "Re-Lives") that would ensure the long-term, safe operation of Concorde, were already in place and had the full confidence of both the French (DGAC) and British (CAA) civil aviation authorities. The Spinetta/Forgeard conspiracy also allegedly contained a specific AF request that AIRBUS promptly come up with a way to effectively

prevent BA from continuing to operate what would otherwise become a Concorde monopoly on the North Atlantic. This reprehensible collusion was revealed by British author Rob Lewis in late 2003, in his book, "SUPERSONIC SECRETS" (Expose, a division of Secret Books Ltd., London).

AIRBUS, in turn, had its plate full with development of the massive A380 aircraft and the A350. Thus, M. Forgeard was not happy about continuing to assign AIRBUS personnel to the technical support of just twelve Concorde in the fleets of AF and BA, which would never be augmented by further orders. He would be more than receptive to M. Spinetta's entreaties, and would devise a truly Machiavellian "solution."

At this point, it is essential to examine what was going on inside British Airways, where total support of Concorde was also required in order to keep her flying.

BA's CEO in 2003 was Roderick ("Rod") Eddington, a native of Australia, who was initially far more supportive of Concorde. Without his then-positive position, she would probably not have continued flying at BA after the 2000 Gonesse crash. However, where there had been strong supporters of the BA Concorde in key departments in prior years and through several prior financial crises, who always put themselves and their jobs on the line on Concorde's behalf, this was manifestly not the case after Concorde's post-crash return to service on November 7, 2001:

(1) Director of Engineering Alan MacDonald was perennially upset because the high cost of Concorde maintenance put a disproportionately-high dent in his overall budget, while he "never saw the profits." Thus, in early 2000, he recommended an end to all Concorde charters (which had provided about 10% of total BA Concorde revenues, plus incalculable international prestige for BA). He further alleged that future Concorde major maintenance checks would result in the necessity to have two BA Concorde in the hangar together, on an overlapping-schedule basis, thereby reducing the available BA operational fleet to just five Concorde. Of course, there had been no reduction of BA's six to seven-strong operational Concorde fleet in more than two decades. The net result of this astonishing and negative position, caused by the fact that Mr. MacDonald simply did not wish to spend a sufficient sum on Concorde Engineering manpower to enable at least six of BA's seven Concorde to be available for service on any given day, was BA's discontinuance of its high-demand morning service from London/LHR to New York/JFK, as well as its afternoon service from New York/JFK to London/LHR. Indeed, BA Concorde G-BOAA and G-BOAB never received their safety modifications and became derelict at LHR, with G-BOAA being stripped of parts to maintain BA's five operational Concorde. Suddenly, BA's fixed Concorde costs were only compensable from revenues produced by six to seven weekly round-trip flights between London/LHR and New York/JFK and a few winter flights to Barbados. As a final betrayal, Mr. MacDonald submitted grossly-inflated cost statements for Concorde maintenance to BA's corporate planners, including the slanted allocation of 100% of the expense of an entire Maintenance hangar to BA's five-Concorde fleet. The direct effect of this unconscionable ploy was to convince senior BA executives that it would simply cost

too much to keep Concorde flying: whether on a scheduled basis or on a limited, exhibition-flying-only basis. BA CEO Rod Eddington, who had given Mr. MacDonald his job, was spending most of his time trying to rescue a nearly-insolvent BA from the financial morass into which it had been driven by his predecessor, Robert Ayling. Lamentably, with his own key executives stacking the deck internally against future Concorde operations, he decided not to challenge their destructive assertions concerning "Engineering limitations on serviceable Concorde availability" and their manipulatively-inflated, alleged costs of Concorde maintenance. A final blow was a letter sent to him by several BA Safety Service executives (most of whom were Boeing-oriented and unfamiliar with the specific facts of Concorde maintenance), in which the airworthiness of Concorde for future operations was belittled: mostly based upon the three Air France incidents and one BA incident outlined below in sub-paragraphs (a) through (d). While experienced Concorde maintenance personnel sharply disputed its conclusions, this was the anti-Concorde "coup de grace" inside BA (in March, 2003), coming as it did on the heels of: (a)The AF Gonesse crash of July 25, 2000, which included a maintenance wheel-spacer omission; (b)The AF Halifax fuel-leak incident of February 19, 2003; (c)Two separate 2003 rudder surface delaminations, one each on an AF (February 27, 2003) and BA (November 27, 2002) Concorde, which may have necessitated a future rudder redesign; and (d)A 2003 wiring short and resultant minor insulation fire, located in a right-hand lower wing fairing, on a BA Concorde flying from New York/JFK to London Heathrow Airport, which was never disclosed outside BA. The cause was friction rubbing of a wire bundle, caused by BA Maintenance when the bundle was moved as part of a modification and was incorrectly reinstalled. It is probable that all of these problems were caused by inadequate Concorde maintenance thoroughness at both airlines, caused by the negative feelings of too many of their key executives against the airplane's continued operation, with numerous Captain's errors on AF Flight #4590 contributing to the 2000 Gonesse crash as well.

(2)Irresponsible and unsupported arguments were then made by Air France, which circulated the lying allegation that "Concorde is 27 years old, and should be retired solely because she is an 'old airplane' and 'it's time'." This is utter nonsense, as any aeronautical engineer worth his salt will tell you that aircraft can be kept flying indefinitely when given appropriate maintenance. Just look at the Boeing B-52 bomber, which has been in service for 62 years, and the McDonnell Douglas DC-8-60/70 Series, which has been in service for 50 years, as only two relevant examples. Plus, the highest-time BA Concorde (G-BOAD) retired with just 23,397 total hours: about the same as a five-year-old Boeing 747-400. The highest-time AF Concorde (F-BVFA) retired with just 17,824 total hours: about the same as a four-year-old Boeing 747-400. So much for Air France veracity under Jean-Cyril Spinetta.

Unhappily, BA's Director of Safety and Security Geoff Want--an engineer himself--refused to properly discredit these Air France lies to BA CEO Rod Eddington, thus helping them to take root at the highest levels inside the BA executive suite.

(3)BA had a Marketing contingency plan in effect since 1988, to counter any reduction in demand for high-priced Concorde tickets among its traditional top business-executive clientele: as occurred during a cyclic downturn in the US and UK economies in Spring, 2000; after the July 25, 2000 Gonesse crash; and after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Center and the subsequent start of the Iraq war. Essentially, the 40-seat front cabin could have been turned into an ultra-premium Concorde service class for the fat-cats, at a higher fare that few of them would have refused to pay, with such amenities as limousine service at both New York and London and a plethora of other deluxe perks. The 60-seat rear cabin could have been fitted with more seats (Concorde was certificated for 128 passengers), at a pitch of less than 38 inches but still quite comfortable, to be sold at *still-high Business Class prices. Indeed, an early March, 2003 top-level BA meeting proposed precisely this approach, and would have added 10 seats to the rear cabin of BA Concordes while keeping her flying for at least another 5 years, and beyond. Ironically, right in the middle of that key meeting, AF's Jean-Cyril Spinetta called and asked to speak to BA's Rod Eddington, who was present. When Mr. Eddington relayed the "good news" on future BA Concorde operations to M. Spinetta, his reply was: "That will never happen. And AF will not pay any more Concorde support costs, either." The larcenous AIRBUS support-costs increase [see below] came shortly thereafter, and the secret AF/Airbus CEO conspiracy proceeded to do its dirty-work and relegate all AF and BA Concordes to museums later in CY2003.*

Or, as a viable alternative, both cabins' seating could have been left as-is and would have also produced very high load factors and handsome revenue for BA at Business Class prices. After all, AF was routinely dumping Concorde seats (mostly outside France) at Business Class prices anyway. Adopting this approach at both BA and AF would have probably solved the situation of future flying at less than break-even cost for both airlines, *including reserves for progressive maintenance*, as their Concordes would have most likely been flying nearly-full all the time.

Further, the average price of jet fuel rose from 78 cents per gallon in January, 2000 to USD 3.19 per gallon on August 17, 2012. However, this increase would not have had the slightest effect on demand for Concorde seats. Concorde burned an average of 6,985 US gallons of fuel per hour on a transatlantic crossing. Given a block time of 3 hours 45 minutes from New York/JFK to either London/LHR or Paris/CDG, this equals 26,194 US gallons of jet fuel per flight. Adding the difference of USD 2.41 per gallon produces an extra fuel cost of USD 63,128. When you divide this figure by an assumed average of 80 Concorde passengers per flight, the applicable fuel surcharge that would totally negate this fuel cost increase for AF and BA would be just USD 789 per passenger. This relatively-minor sum would not have deterred any prospective Concorde passenger for an instant, as they were already paying between USD 5,000-6,000 per one-way seat.

The key BA decisionmakers, including senior executive Mike Street, lamentably refused to support a fallback move to this excellent contingency plan, as its long-term usefulness was outweighed by Engineering and Safety Service's internal machinations. This put a decisive nail in Concorde's coffin on the BA side.

Now back to the Spinetta/Forgeard collusion. There is no question that the top executives at AF knew of the defeatist influence of Alan MacDonald's Engineering Department on BA's available Concorde utilization, as the AF and BA Concorde Operations Departments communicated regularly. As AIRBUS could not just walk away from the technical support function of both airlines' Concorde fleets without breaching key contracts with BA, as well as running afoul of the UK Fair Trading Practices laws, an intrigue worthy of the Borgias was implemented. AIRBUS President Noel Forgeard suddenly announced that a new extra cost of technical support over the subsequent two-year period would be GBP 20 million per year for each of BA and AF, for a total of GBP 40 million for the two airlines combined. However, as AF was going to swiftly retire its own Concorde fleet, this entire extra cost would then fall on BA's shoulders alone, pursuant to the 1984/1985 Agreement updates to the original bilateral British/French government Concorde Agreement (Treaty) of November 29, 1962. The same principle would presumably apply to AIRBUS' prior annual technical support bill of GBP 60 million, with an additional GBP 30 million added to BA's annual Concorde operating cost upon an AF Concorde retirement. As BA was down to just six to seven weekly round-trip London/LHR-New York/JFK flights, the increased AIRBUS technical-support bill to BA of an additional GBP 70 million per year effectively removed the possibility that such reduced service would ever produce a positive financial result. Of course, had BA returned to a twice-daily scheduled service under its 1988 Marketing contingency plan, plus operated profitable charters again, the increased AIRBUS charges would have mattered less: as recently as the late 1990's, BA Concorde operations were producing an annual profit of between GBP 30-50 million. BA CEO Rod Eddington reportedly told numerous BA Concorde flight crew that the CY2000-2001 grounding was costing BA over GBP 5 million per month in net, after-tax profit, or more than GBP 60 million for a full year. Further, the resumption of charters would have removed any trepidations about flying Concorde that may have lingered among the top business executives who patronized scheduled Concorde service, such as: "If a honeymoon couple is not worried about taking a Concorde charter around the Bay of Biscay, why should I be worried about taking a transatlantic Concorde flight?"

As for AF, though very little (if any) profit would have been made on its limited scheduled service, the adoption of BA's 1988 Marketing contingency plan on its own flight would probably have produced at least a break-even operation, thus preserving the "halo effect" of flying Concorde that benefited the entire airline's world image and uniquely satisfied its top customers. Resuming charters would have also helped the AF bottom-line.

Here is what happened next:

(1) On April 10, 2003, AF and BA press releases announced that both airlines would retire Concorde later that year. AF's last scheduled passenger flight would be on May 31, 2003 (M. Spinetta was in a great hurry), and BA's last scheduled passenger flight would be on October 24, 2003. After that, both airlines' entire Concorde fleets would be loaned (BA) or given (AF) to aviation museums, or put on display at airports on the same basis.

(2) BA CEO Rod Eddington had spent GBP 2 million on new interiors for each of its five operational Concorde, or GBP 10 million total, during the 15-month safety-modification grounding of 2000-2001. He received a nasty lesson in "Air France business ethics as the ultimate oxymoron under Jean-Cyril Spinetta" when AIRBUS presented its GBP 40 million extra technical-support bill, meaning that all those elegant new interiors had been an eight-figure waste of BA's money. The same applied to the approximately GBP 20 million that BA had spent on the "Re-Life 1" maintenance program for the five of its seven Concorde that needed it, which would have enabled them to fly until 2008 upon reaching 8,500 supersonic cycles. An additional cost of about GBP 36 million would have taken BA's entire fleet of seven Concorde to 10,000 supersonic cycles under "Re-Life 2", and would have extended its service life from 2008 to 2013. After that, a "Re-Life 3" program was envisioned. As AF had never implemented the initial "Re-Life 1" to its own (pre-2000) six-Concorde fleet, this is the reason why AF had previously announced that it planned to retire its Concorde fleet in 2007. But the Gonesse, Halifax and CDG-JFK (rudder) incidents induced M. Spinetta to accelerate AF's Concorde retirement to May 31, 2003 instead.

(3) BA wrote off GBP 84 million in Concorde retirement expenses.

(4) AF wrote off USD 65 million in Concorde retirement expenses.

(5) While AF rushed to get its Concorde out of the skies to keep M. Spinetta happy, BA packed its planes with "supersonic tourists" over the next six months, and realized about GBP 92 million in revenue as nearly every flight departed with all 100 seats filled with paying passengers.

(6) AIRBUS' Noel Forgeard refused to continue technical support of Concorde after October 31, 2003, thereby ensuring that both the UK CAA and French DGAC would reclaim and cancel Concorde's Certificates of Airworthiness immediately thereafter. M. Forgeard even refused to maintain the minimum technical-support function that would have kept a single BA Concorde flying in the UK on special occasions, which most of the British public wanted, thus reportedly infuriating BA CEO Rod Eddington: an Australian who appeared to care a lot more about Concorde preservation than did most of his British subordinate executives. It is this near-total abdication of Concorde support inside British Airways' executive suite, possibly excepting BA CEO Rod Eddington [but see Paragraphs (7), (9) and (10), below] that remains one of the lasting scandals of this entire, sordid story: particularly as an opposite picture was presented by BA to a gullible UK public.

(7)AF auctioned-off its entire inventory of Concorde spare parts on November 15, 2003, to ensure that these impossible-to-find necessities would be so dispersed as to irrevocably bar any future French Concorde flights. BA followed suit with two auctions, on December 1, 2003 and April 17, 2004, with the same intent: aimed partially at Virgin Atlantic CEO and entrepreneur Richard Branson, who had made several bids to buy and operate the BA Concorde fleet after the BA retirement announcement of April 10, 2003. (Mr. Branson and top BA management had been bitter enemies and rivals for years). Rod Eddington was BA's CEO at the time. Finally, the remaining spares that Airbus had sold to the nonprofit French aviation organization Aerotheque in 2003 (for one Euro) were auctioned in Toulouse between September 28-October 1, 2007. Many of these spares had originally been ordered for French Concordes in excess of the one early-production and seven final-production aircraft that were actually built in Toulouse, and their sale effectively precludes the possibility that Air France Concorde F-BTSD, on display at the LeBourget Airport, Paris Air & Space Museum and possibly still receiving some routine maintenance from volunteer retired AF Concorde maintenance personnel, will ever fly again.

(8)Faithful Concorde enthusiasts in both London and Paris jammed key airport viewing areas to greet Concorde until the end: many with tears in their eyes and all totally unaware of the secret machinations by which they and Concorde had been utterly betrayed by Messrs. Spinetta and Forgeard, by French President Jacques Chirac (who, in my personal opinion, must have consented to the AIRBUS and AF anti-Concorde actions by two of his key appointees and proteges), and by far too many willing BA executive handmaidens from whom CEO Rod Eddington should have received unbiased and accurate advice.

(9)It was revealed in CY2006 that BA had ordered in late 2003 that the hydraulic fluid be drained from all of its seven Concordes (still owned by BA), and their electrical systems disabled, to doubly-ensure that the cost to make a BA Concorde airworthy again would be prohibitive. [Pre-production BA Concorde G-BBDG, used for flight-testing only, is also owned by BA but was never a candidate for future operation.] Captain W.D. ("Jock") Lowe, former BA Chief Pilot and Chief Concorde Pilot, was quoted in several newspaper stories as rightly calling this amazingly-destructive and self-serving corporate decision "an act of vandalism." Rod Eddington was BA's CEO at the time. As a direct result, Captain Lowe estimated in CY2006 that it would take at least GBP 15 million to return a BA Concorde to airworthiness. This cost has escalated drastically since 2006, to at least GBP 100 million in CY2017 for simple exhibition flying, and up to GBP 500 million for recertification as a Mach 2 commercial airliner. However, the lack of airworthiness certification and the scattering of Concorde spares to the winds via auctions would probably preclude the restoration of any AF or BA Concorde, regardless of how much money could be thrown at such a project.

(10)Under former BA Executive Chairman Martin Broughton; his successor, Keith Williams; and BA CEO William Walsh, all requests for relinquishments of title to BA Concordes, made by various pro-Concorde groups and aviation museums, have been summarily refused. Several well-placed, confidential sources have stated that the real reason for their

intransigence is an alleged, secret CY2003 contract between BA and AIRBUS, in which BA allegedly abandoned planned legal action against AIRBUS for its unfair trading practice (under UK law) of unilaterally and arbitrarily imposing such a high charge for Concorde “product support.” The AIRBUS price increase, of course, was an integral part of its Machiavellian collusion with AF against BA, as described above. The alleged quid pro quo for BA was a large discount on a fleet of new AIRBUS A320-family aircraft. Rod Eddington was BA’s CEO at the time. It is further alleged that a key clause in such contract also mandates that BA retain ownership of all of its complete Concorde airframes, so that no one can ever fly them again, with heavy financial penalties should BA breach this provision. The truth of these allegations remains locked in the legal files of both BA and AIRBUS. If they are accurate, it would appear that BA’s Rod Eddington, after a good deal of prior support for Concorde, plunged the final knife into her back, joining the poisonous dagger previously inserted there by AF Chairman Jean-Cyril Spinetta. Either way, though, the demise of the fastest, loveliest and most-exciting passenger aircraft ever built was directly caused by the executives of its two airline operators. BA has formally replied “No comment” to my enquiry as to the truth of these allegations, and Rod Eddington did not even bother to reply to my two email requests for the truth. I now call upon both BA and AIRBUS to open their files on this key matter, so that the French, British and US citizenry, and indeed the entire world, knows whom to properly blame for Concorde’s grossly-premature retirement.

#### EPILOGUE:

(a) Noel Forgeard joined AIRBUS in 1998, as the personal choice of French President Jacques Chirac. He was later elevated by President Chirac to the co-Chairmanship of EADS: parent of AIRBUS. In June, 2006, he was forced to resign in disgrace because of his involvement in an insider-trading scandal, in which he sold nearly seven million Euros-worth of his family's AIRBUS stock prior to several public announcements that serious delays in A380 and A350 production would cost AIRBUS over six billion Euros over the succeeding four-year period, and for mismanaging the A380 program while President of AIRBUS. He and six other top AIRBUS executives, including John Leahy, chief commercial (sales) officer, was formally charged with criminal insider trading by French prosecutors on May 30, 2008.

On March 18, 2015, France’s Constitutional Council let all of these self-serving thieves go free because of alleged “double jeopardy”, incurred when complacent French stock market regulators had already cleared them in their own forum. Thus do the powerful and well-connected in France get away with serious felonies that should have landed them all in jail. It is to be hoped that the ill-gotten gains of all seven of these unscrupulous corporate pirates were completely eaten-up by high-priced defense-lawyers’ fees over the seven-year litigation period. M. Forgeard, now age 70, is a Director of Schneider Electric and of several other prominent French corporations.

(b) Jean-Cyril Spinetta retired from Air France on July 1, 2013. He was not indicted for any past air crashes, but AF’s former CEO, Pierre-Henri Gourgeon, is one of the six executives who stood trial in CY2006 in conjunction with the Air Inter A320 crash of January

20, 1992, when he ran the DGAC. He, and the other five defendants, was acquitted of criminal charges on November 7, 2006. (Mr. Gourgeon was fired as AF-KLM Group CEO on October 17, 2011, because of a 197 million Euro quarterly loss and the AF Flight 447 Airbus A330 crash between Rio de Janeiro and Paris/CDG of June 1, 2009.) M. Spinetta has never been publicly held to account for his lead role in “The Betrayal of Concorde”, which is an appalling omission by the news media. His name will live in infamy to those who know of his cowardice in successfully conspiring to prematurely retire Concorde fourteen years ago. Alexandre de Juniac was named as the new AF-KLM Group Chairman and CEO on July 1, 2013. M. Spinetta, now age 73, remains the Honorary Chairman of Air France/KLM Group and is a Director of Alitalia and Le Monde, S.A

(c) Jacques Chirac’s term as President of France is now over. His "crocodile tears", shared with M. Spinetta and M. Forgeard at numerous AF Concorde retirement ceremonies in France, should not soon be forgotten. He left office loathed by a majority of the French people. His certain support of AF Chairman Jean-Cyril Spinetta’s secret conspiracy with AIRBUS should be added to a list of his other official misdeeds, including serious French criminal election-law violations.

(d) Sir Rod Eddington left BA on September 30, 2005, having been knighted for his BA service, and returned to Australia. He is now Chairman of Infrastructure Australia. On August 9, 2009, ANZ Banking Group revealed that Mr. Eddington and the Bank had nullified their previously-announced plan to have Mr. Eddington become that Bank’s new Chairman in February, 2010. One wonders whether the Rio Tinto mining corporate espionage scandal involving the Government of China as the victim had any bearing on this surprise announcement, as Mr. Eddington was a Rio Tinto Director at the time.

Mr. Eddington’s long-time presence (since 1999) as a Non-Executive Director of News Corporation—Rupert Murdoch’s worldwide media empire—ensures that none of the Murdoch-owned newspapers (including THE LONDON TIMES and THE WALL STREET JOURNAL) will be in any great hurry to report on the major news story revealed by this article, particularly as it may concern Mr. Eddington’s key corporate decisions that sealed Concorde’s fate in CY2003. Mr. Eddington, now age 67, also serves as a non-executive Director of several other corporations that are charter members of the Australian “old-boy network”.

(e) Alan MacDonald, Mike Street and Geoff Want have retired from BA. The former, in particular, is anathema to a long list of former BA Concorde flight crew and operations personnel.

No longer can we cross the North Atlantic Ocean in 3 hours 23 minutes at 56,000 feet; nor experience that mighty jet-fighter blast down the runway at takeoff; nor climb at up to 12,000 feet per minute on special occasions (which I did out of Lisbon/LIS for Paris/CDG the day after we captured the Westbound Around-The-World speed record); nor revel in the ultimate mode of high-speed luxury transportation. Instead, the actions of those persons described above have resulted in the first backward step in aviation since the Wright

Brothers first flew, on December 17, 1903. Let us hope that the next supersonic passenger aircraft receives far more loyalty from those airline and aerospace executives at the top, and from key politicians, than did Concorde fourteen years ago, as the final knives were plunged into her elegant back.

\*This article is dedicated to the memory of Air France Concorde First Officer  
Jean Marcot:

**AIRMAN**

**FRIEND**

**(1950-2000)**

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\*\*This article is current as of April 19, 2017.\*\*

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