

I run to Hand: An A340-600 of Iberia I fill of illusion for Guatemala

Javier Ortega Figueiral

Special correspondent to Guatemala

In this terrible 2005 in the meteorological thing, which has affected repeatedly Central America with countless natural disasters, the hurricane Stan struck strongly Guatemala in the first days of October. I run to Hand, the NGO of the personnel of Iberia, it(he,she) reacted with rapidity to the most serious situation of a seriously affected country. We have had the honor of being witnesses of an operation that it(he,she) converts to an air line into a symbol of hope.

The IB6319 Madrid-City of Guatemala del passed 25 of October was not a flight more of Iberia. It was an exceptional occasion to see as the things work when they take control of desire, affection and, coverall, disinterestedly. Thus, when the airplane that brought to me of Barcelona arrived at Madrid happened next to one of the ten Airbus A340-600 - the registered EC-INO, baptized like "Gaudí" - which it has the company and I could pay attention to the load that surrounded to him. It took special symbols of Hand by hand. By the other flank, in the passage stairs, the personnel movement raising boxes the passenger salon was incessant. It turned out impressive to see the operative one around mounted. To the 14 hours we could accede to the platform where it was parked and there it received Fernando to us Conte, president of the company, and we spoke with the ambassador of Guatemala in Spain, Gereda Robert, one of the great impellers of this flight, fabulous person, who single minutes before was remangado in the cabin helping to place boxes in the superior part of the airplane. It seemed lie which enlarged everything what it was going away to load in the immense warehouses, but was even more impressive the vision of the passage cabin, totally covered with plastics and packages in all and each one of the seats. The 298 armchairs of the tourist class were occupied by different products and, since there were but no site in that section, it was decided to last hour to take advantage of 18 seats the Business class Extra to even transport more material of the humanitarian aid. In this case special deal with mimo to those armchairs, that had an exceptional aspect that morning of Tuesday.

The ambassador and his wife dismissed moved the airship that was going to move directly to its country. On the other hand, the president of Iberia returned to his office satisfied with the sensation with to have fulfilled a fabulous mission. All those that were collaborating in the preparation tasks felt equally proud of the work which they had made disinterestedly, like everything what it takes control of and for Hand by hand. Already on board, with the closed doors and to point to roll, I stated that only we were going to fly 17 people in that immense airplane. Between these, the technical crew, formed by three pilots: commander Antonio Artime and the brothers Iñigo and Javier Brown Fernandez, enchanted with being able to collaborate in its free days. In the passenger salon, the supercharge Julia Vidriales and the TCP Antonio Jiménez, both simpatiquísimos and from the beginning made us feel like in house. On the part of the Direction of Iberia, the person in charge of Institutional Relations Francisco Extremera and the head of Press, White Daisy. And, evidently, he could not lack in that flight the president and soul of the ONG of the employees of the company: Maria Alventosa, who is as well stewardess of the fleet of A340. The organization After a pair of hours in the air, the auxiliary crew served a delicious food, selection of the menus created by "chef" Sergi Arola for the airline. All a primicia, since these did not appear until the following week in the intercontinental lines for which they were created. During this lunch I seated next to Maria Alventosa to know of the operation of this ONG in general and on this shipment to Guatemala in individual. It told me that, officially, Hand by hand exists from 1994, after a first year of good intentions, cradles coverall in transporting products from first necessity to Equatorial Guinea, taking advantage of the only weekly frequency from Iberia to Malabo, that was also the only international connection that tapeworm that country. When seeing the potential and the desire to do many but things, taking advantage of all the possible occasions, were created the foundation finally, uniting the trips of the crew with the cession of space in the warehouses of the airplanes of the company, later to extend that implication to all the employees of the company, beyond of the group of crew of technician and passenger salon (TCP) of flight. Since then, in addition to the own transport of material, they have financed and maintained schools, day-care centers, reinsertado young left, or cured to small patients transferring them to Spain from his countries of origin. Continuous Maria explaining things without stopping, like the countries in which the aid was centered until the moment: Ecuador, Peru, Cuba, Argentina, Equatorial Guinea, and from the year last, with the direct flights to Central America from Spain, are programming new projects of all type. I remain with an recorded phrase: "this ONG is not simply an aid group, is not for anything proselitista, but that is a chain of favors. Hand by hand reaches directly from the problem the solution and does all the possible one to be there and to fix many things ". At the moment there are 500 active partners, but when it is to support any project, the implication of all the employees of the company is Maxima and crews of flight, maintenance,

ground crew or load collaborates disinterestedly in everything. People other people's to Iberia even imply themselves in all this. "In the 11 years of history, we took distributed but of 1,200 tons of aid", Alventosa remembers. "Our income to a large extent come from donativos and annual contributions of our partners. I hope that after this flight, she returns to grow sensitivity and people like whom reads interested A/L92, lovers and of the world of Aviation, collaborate with us. We did not let do something directly related to this world "concluded. Something but late, Francisco Extremera explained to me how complicated went to desprogramar to the EC-INO of its habitual flights. The previous day had arrived at night from North Tenerife and from the disembarkation of the last passengers the activity inside this A340 was constant. And it is that a thing is the load that took in warehouse, palletized and ordered, with a tremendous work, but that Position had been made in the Terminal of Iberia. But the positioning of all the packages in all and each one of the seats supposed I authenticate bobbin embroider of several hours. Extremera also remembers other great mobilizations, as the shipment of two DC-10 and 747 to Honduras and Nicaragua years back for reasons similar - the Mitch- hurricane the advantage of the four shipment of Airbus A319 for the special base of Miami, that flew from Europe to the United States loaded to the tops of aid for the earthquake victims in El Salvador, or flights to the Dominican Republica, Zaire or Venezuela as far as possible to palliate the damages suffered there after natural catastrophes. This it recognizes that most satisfactory of their position, the institutional relations of the company, are not to deal with ambassadors, presidents of Independent communities or managers of great corporations, but the coordination between Hand by hand and the cupola of Iberia, to obtain as important actions as the trip that we were making. During the long flight, I also crossed several times the airplane, from end to end, happening slowly through its two corridors, being conscious of the importance and of the exotismo of that occasion. From row 11 backwards everything was pure and strange silence, single broken by the constant rumor of the four motors. Where normally they would go seated tens of passengers then boxes, great plastic packages were accumulated and bottles. To a side blankets, the other antidiarreicos, beyond rice, "potitos" of infantile food and prepared water. But back, turrón, whole milk and maternizada, oil, diapers and even the components of control of the plant portable water-treatment plant that went unloaded in the great inferior warehouse. This was going to overflow with much more voluminous materials. It was an unforgettable image. The arrival to Guatemala After ten flight hours we entered the Continent by the North coast of Honduras, concretely happening over San Pedro Sula, at that time another destiny of Iberia in the region, whose airport was easily distinguishable 31,000 feet more down. The forest mass of the zone followed uninterrupted erasing any sign of borders of which they appear in the maps, but that are not distinguished with the own eyes. With the airplane descending, we gave an ample turn to fly over to low height the city of the Guatemala, greatest and populated

with Central America, with almost 3 million inhabitants, to give a final turn on the lake of Amatitlán, who we saw so much by the window as by the central screen of television, that emitted the real image from the tail rudder. Already in end, track 19 pretended much more cuts of which it was, 2,989 m.s, and with the completely loaded airplane we arrived until the end from the same one. Model -600 is so long that it must make "backtrack" (turn on if same) in the same airstrip to even return rolling towards the terminal. We were left unemployed in the entrance of the parking, since the Aurora is custom in the aerodrome "" towing to the airplanes until the position of parking to take advantage of the space to the maximum. With the airplane finally stopped, worn and leaned to a footbridge by telescope of boarding, the technical crew left the cabin and we gave a applause them deserved by the good made work, shared by the auxiliary crew to do the own thing with the few passengers who we had enjoyed a service outside series. Ç\$1 suddenly began to appear people by the door that venia to receive to us, but, coverall to gather the 55,000 DGS. of load that transported the airplane. As soon as they arrived at the zone of seats where the boxes were located, the expressions were of incredulity and emotion. All and each one repeated the same gesture at the top, taking the hands or covering the mouth before the panorama that presented/displayed the practical totality of the cabin, gesture that repeated Wendy de Berger, wife of the president of Guatemala, that from the first days of storms it has wanted to be in first row from the aids to his town. Also the chief of a main directorate of Civil Aeronautics raised on board who invited to us on the following day to be present at the exhibition of the "Thunderbirds", the acrobatic patrol of the USAF, within the annual aerial festival of the city, whose integral collection was destined to the affected ones by the Stan, a name already presents/displays in our heads, but that were by hand going to be the denominator common of the following days with Hand in the country. Maria Alventosa visibly was affected before the reaction of all those that had raised the airplane already. In their face the two hours of dream conciliated in last thirty and so many were reflected little and the satisfaction to see that we were already in Guatemala yet that material surrounding to us. Also he was with us at the first moments in that country the Spanish ambassador, Juan the Lopez Doriga and their wife, of a personal quality who make be proud of the diplomatic body. He was in background discretísimo, but present in the delivery. In the time passed from the first inspection on board key the night, and we lowered already to the platform with a starred sky. There, "pallets" of load that 12 hours before rested on the platform of Barajas had arrived at their destiny, and was them lowering in great vehicles of "handling". Without giving account us, all those that we had flown until there we surrounded in semicircle one of these great packages by near 4,000 kg, and yet what it had been lived until then, the supercharge it could not hold so many emotions and it broke to cry, infecting to some but of the shared in common spirit and disinterested delivery of that day. When we raised the passage cabin again to take our properties, a row of local volunteers had formed, dressed all in a

showy yellow color, that made a chain human that went the packages from the later part to the door of front exit. Another impressive image of one more a performance ` flows to flowed that never. On the following day we went with a small bus towards one of the zones but affected by the devastating storm: Panabaj, a town of 8,000 inhabitants next to Santiago de Atitlán. Is difficult to explain the sensation perceived when crossing a scene like which one single one had seen until then in television or even in films: due to interminable storms of several days, volcano, the Toliman, undid partially opening a breach of 100 by 300 m.s, devastating totally all the zone and taking ahead to thousands of people. Good part of these follows missing and all their properties, houses and lives partial or were totally erased of the Earth face. Just inaugurated the hospitalito premises it has been buried under 3 mud m.s, as well as culture fields, small commerce and houses If to see all that desolation it caused chills, plus it was it to think about the suffering of the affected ones. In spite of it, many considered lucky people to continue living and simply assumed that the happened thing was, ` will of Dios'. Hundreds of people were reacomodated in improvised, churches or relocated refuges in other places, that received, under supervision of people in charge designated by Hand by hand, the aid sent from Spain with Iberia in the this and following regular flights. From our western perspective privileged person, to help to whom needs to him is less than it is possible to be done. And in that she was also the first lady of the country, returning again to the affected zone at which Bell 412 of the Presidential Squadron arrived in a helicopter, one of so many local airships that, from the same day of the catastrophe, the 4 of October, were dedicated to help the citizens, nonsingle in Panabaj, but in other so many places distributed by one third part of the country, in the plateau and the coast of the Pacifico - but affected -, totalizing 103 municipalities and 15 departments that in greater or smaller measurement, have undergone the effect of the Stan. Seeing all that, it was difficult to value if all the aid with that we had flown until there the previous day were a drop in the sea, a lake or a glass, but, in any case, he was something that was going to take to food, hope and aid to people who truly needed all that. A fabulous country Nevertheless, everything does not have to be aid and support of altruistic way. All we were convinced that the best way of than Guatemala surpasses this crisis and comes out ahead is, in the short term, by means of the tourism. Iberia has bet hard by this destiny, with three weekly flights from Madrid, in which it is the first direct link between the country and Europe in history, a route that settled down a year ago already and of that the people in charge of the same one very are satisfied, in occupation as in load as much transported, so and as they commented so much to us the manager of the airline for Central America like the local representative. Also the chief of a main directorate of Guatemalan Tourism spoke to us of the reactivation of the Tourism. Guatemala is a rich place in natural and cultural beauty, that perfectly responds to the phrase "country of the eternal spring", a topic that can sound somewhat beaten or clearing the meloso, but that is veridico when living it in first

person: Chichicastenango, the South, Old coasts, the Eastern region, the Verapaces, Tikal or Atitlán, is wonderful places to discover, that they have crazy desire to receive new visitors, who will be there but like special travellers who like tourists, by attractive and the different thing that it is to move until there. A territory that surprises and fascinates, that it has hotels that are destinies in if same, complemented by some of main attractive historical and the natural ones of the world. Most of these some did not suffer damage after the passage of the Stan, and hopes with the opened arms which they want to know them. I animate to them to that they do it. BOX a president of flag Born in Valencia for 44 years, Maria Alventosa, the Maxima responsible for Hand by hand, has been taking working like stewardess of Iberia from the 19 years, alternating its work with studies of social anthropology. To the 29 years, a cancer in the lymphatic system was diagnosed to him that gave three months him of life. A situation that gave an evident radical turn him to its life. Nevertheless it surpassed with all the force that curse and during his convalecencia it was implied in different projects from aid. With 32 years, already reincorporada his work, it began to outline the idea of a ONG applied to an aviation company: to take advantage of the leftover space the warehouses of the airplanes and the luggage of the crew to be able to transport needed aid to countries and people, something that apparently is simple, but that it required of a certainty and definition that some time cost to outline. What began with small shipments that she herself took, she extended his companions of crew, later to boxes, containers and even to whole airplanes, all it little by little, taking responsibility of the evolution of the aids and the growth and importance of the shipments. Maria has left the skin in each project of Hand by hand and with her, much people, who believe in that are many things to do. She defines herself dirtily as "human", loving of the terrenales pleasures, but knowledgeable that if it is wanted to improve the world is had to begin by one same one. She lives with passion his other facets, like the writing, the policy - the family finishes registering itself in Political Sciences and. BOX the collaborators of the flight Its aid was of totally disinterested form, but it is to have to remember who were the companies, particular citizens and organisms that turned upside down by hand in the shared in common flight responding by hand: Iberia yielded the airplane; AENA (Spanish Airports and Airplane navigation), exempted of the payment of all the rates; CEPSA and Repsol provided the fuel gratuitously, whereas CLH did the own thing in their distribution; Gate Gourmet yielded "catering"; and Cafares, Alter Laboratories, Rotary Club, Foundation Cocaine Tail, Legalitas, Farmamundi, Dinotec and the Association of Hosteleros Industrialists of Madrid and many individuals contributed good part of products, until surpassing the 55 tons that were transported in the IB6319 of that 25 of October and in the regular flights that followed to him, since the load was surpassed fully that podia to take that special flight.