

THE FLYING RUSJAN BROTHERS

s y n o p s i s

by PETER POVH



"Rusjan controlled the airplane with his body ..., strings were tied to his body ... Nowadays you can't even think about such controls ... How could he fly at all ... Maybe his nature kept him in the air?"

Albin NOVAK, 82 years
Retired pilot of passenger airplanes
Builder of the same size flying replica of Rusjan's airplane EDA

"The proportions of the airplane length to the wings' span, pilot's and engine's weight, wing profiles and shape, but above all the form of the tail ...? How could it fly? Without engine working, the plane would have fallen down like a stone ... Edvard was extremely lucky to fly and come back alive!"

Rajmund Krivec, B.Sc.
Aviation forensic expert, Institute for experimental physics
"Josef Stefan Institute", Ljubljana, Slovenia

A STORY OF THE VICTORY AT ANY COST

A monoplane struggles through the scattered haze torn by strong blows of košava wind. Its powerful blowing starts to affect the wing trimmings. The binding wire breaks with a clap. The pilot tries to regain the lost balance by turning the control stick. But the wire on the left wing breaks too - like a guitar string. The left flap comes off. The engine coughs and dies. The pilot pulls the control stick so vigorously that it breaks off. The gust of wind bends first the left and then the right wing. The plane's nose turns towards the earth, the plane starts falling and then it crashes...

Silence



In January 1911, the pilot Edvard Rusjan lost his life in the airplane accident in Belgrade.

Key facts :

PILOT	COUNTRY	DATE OF FIRST FLIGHT	NAME OF PLANE
1. Wright brothers	USA	Dec. 1903	Wright Flyer
2. Santos Dumont	France	Nov. 1906	Santos Dumont "14 bis"
3. Voisin brothers	France	Oct. 1907	Voisin
4. Louis Blériot	France	Nov. 1907	Blériot VII
5. Ellehammer	Denmark	June 1908	Ellehammer IV
6. Glenn Curtiss	USA	July 1908	"Golden Flyer"
7. A. Levavasseur	France	Oct. 1908	"Antoinette"
8. Ferdinand Ferber	France	1908	Ferber no. 9 Biplane
9. A.V. Roe	Great Britain	July 1909	Roe Triplane
10. H. Farman	France	Aug. 1909	Farman III
11. F. Cody	USA-England	Aug. 1909	Cody Biplane
<u>12. Edvard Rusjan</u>	<u>Slovenia-Austria</u>	<u>Nov. 1909</u>	<u>"EDA I"</u>
13. Goupy	France	1909	Goupy Biplane
14. Louis Breguet	France	1909	Breguet I
15. Aristide Faccioli	Italy	Dec. 1909	Faccioli no. 3 Biplane

TV DOCUMENTARY
FORMAT 16 : 9, HD
50 - 52 MINUTE
AVAILABLE IN OCTOBRE 2008

Over voice : ENGLISH OR LOCAL LANGUAGE
Reconstruction inserts : ITALIAN AND SLOVENE LANGUAGE
Interviews: ITALIAN AND SLOVENE LANGUAGE



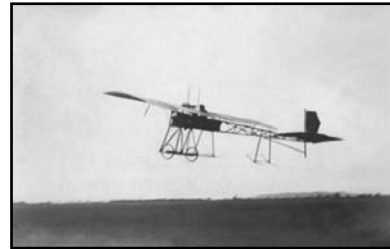
Aeroplane in flying condition, constructed on original Rusjan's plans



Edvard Rusjan was the first victim of Austro-Hungarian aviation. In Yugoslavia, formed only a few years after his death, he became the aviation hero. After Edvard's death his brother Josip emigrated to Argentina.

The myth of Edvard Rusjan is still alive in the hearts of Slovenian aviators also after the breakup of Yugoslavia. In recent years the knowledge on the Rusjan brothers' activities became appreciated in Gorizia where a memorial plaque decorates his family home.

On the 100th anniversary of the Rusjan's first flight (2009) the film would like to be the homage to the Slovenian - Italian Friuli Wright brothers, the Rusjans who challenged the world with their bold dreams, competing with birds.



The filmed story of the Rusjan brothers will be developed on three intertwined levels.

The first level is a documentary and - as much as possible - an intimate story about the Rusjan family. Their still alive descendants (Grazia Rusjan, daughter of Edvard's and Josip's younger brother Carl, lives in Gorizia, other family members live in Argentina) will talk about the destiny of the "flying brothers" Edvard and Josip, their parents, brothers and sisters, their relationship and the emigration drama that fatally marked the family split forever. This story will base mostly on photographic material. The text and dialogues will consider also the linguistic diversity of the Gorizia area as well as the Rusjan family.

The second level is again a documentary, but this time more objective, more scientific. The aviation experts and enthusiasts (among them also Srečko Gombač, the author of the book about the Rusjan brothers, and Albin Novak, a pilot, who with the help of colleagues constructed a replica of the Rusjan brothers airplane Eda 5 which will fly in the film) will give their evidence and try to reconstruct the pioneer times of flying as well as present the questions and dilemmas that the flying brothers had to confront with. They will also answer the questions with regard to the fatal Edvard's crash on Kalemegdan.

The third level is fiction. The melodramatic story (partially includes the poetic freedom and does not necessarily correspond to the real historic events) primarily treats the competition for primacy within the Central-European region among the Italian Faccioli, the Austrian Ettrich and the Rusjan brothers. The competition has not only a connotation of prestige, but involves also further commissions of airplanes for the Italian and Austrian army. The story is developed in the threatening and obscure atmosphere of the forthcoming 1st World War, what can clearly be seen also from the antagonisms and collisions happening in multiethnic Gorizia. Edvard's uncontrollable desire for victory, wherever, whenever and at any cost, and Josip's soberness, consideration and realism, make a good recipe for a winning pair, not only in sports, but also in life and even in love. At least when they are not off balance.

All three stories are dramaturgically intertwined, connected and enriching each other, but at the same time distinctive, despite different time frames. This intertwining will be done on the image level (mixture of black and white and colour footage, of static and dynamic shooting) as well as on the sound level by combining documentary and fiction, reality and imagination.

1. The film starts with documentary footage of successful and unsuccessful flights of the aviation pioneers. The narration tells about the dominance of the American and French aviators during the first flights and the fight for the primacy in the Central-European region (Germany, Italy, Austro-Hungarian Empire). The main actors of this exciting competition were the Italian Aristide Faccioli, the Austrian Igo Ettrich and Edvard Rusjan from Gorizia, from a Slovenian - Friuli family.



2. During the bicycle race on the streets of Gorizia brothers Josip and Edvard Rusjan always co-operate and fight for a victory. But at the end the victory goes to the younger brother Edvard. It seems that Edvard is a born winner and glory suits his character, too. When celebrating the victory in Triglav's house the paths of two brothers cross one another, also because of love. Josip likes beautiful Danica, but Danica sees only Edvard. The older brother has to withdraw.

3. In September 1909, two brothers visit the air meeting in Brescia. The most successful are American and French aviators, while the Italian aircrafts only jump and of course lack success. Faccioli's tri-plane falls to pieces when trying to take-off. Josip and Edvard watch the flights with enthusiasm. At lunch and drinking a bottle of wine, they take an oath on becoming the first to fly in this region. The same day they go to Mr Anzani to buy an engine for their future airplane. As they don't have enough money to buy a new engine, the cunning merchant sells them a used one.

4. In the Rusjan's family cooperage workshop in Gorizia the old and young generations meet. Father Franc, a renowned cooper, follows the activities of his sons with visible interest and occasional help, too. There is no time to be lost, because both brothers know that Faccioli doesn't rest. They also hear about Ettrich's unsuccessful flight. It becomes evident that only days will be decisive. On the other side, their father doesn't believe that the airplane being created in his workshop will ever fly. He worries also because Josip's and Edvard's passion is extremely expensive and manufacture of barrels hardly brings enough money to feed the family.



5. In fact, the family is big. When they all gather around a large table for the Sunday lunch, the atmosphere is really vibrant. There are father Franc and pregnant mother Grazia and their six children: Josip (25), Edvard (23), Lojzka (17), Maria (12), Anton (9) and Ivanka (5). After lunch the oldest son reads a letter written by their sister Ana (21) from Argentina. At the age of 18 she left to the Promised Land. Her letter is full of nostalgia and mother Grazia can't help crying.

Familija

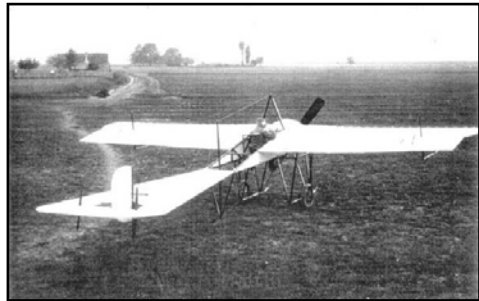


6. Finally Eda is finished (got the name from Edvard's nickname). First they put the parts together at the back-yard to run the engine. It is also the occasion to make a photo of the whole family. A few days later they load the airplane parts onto a cart and take it to the large meadow nearby Gorizia. There they put the parts together once again and the airplane is ready for the first attempt. Edvard has no restraints to go aboard. At the beginning the airplane only makes jumps, but then it rises to the height of 2 meters and flies for 60 meters. It is 25th November, 1909. The brothers are enthusiastic. Edvard suggests to Josip to fly the airplane, but Josip doesn't want to take a risk. A few days later, on 29th November, they repeat their test run with even better success. So they decide to present their airplane to the public. Many people gather on the meadow that day. The organisation is bad, a disorder big and before the take-off the wooden airplane bumps into the cart with a wing. The airplane is ruined.

7. After the first defeat the brothers don't give up. They fiercely begin the construction of new Eda. They also hear that Faccioli succeeded in December 1909. But the competition goes on. However, the brothers don't agree about the wing construction. Edvard talks about flat wings, while the expert Josip speaks in favour of curved wings for a better drive. At the end Edvard's stubbornness wins. Namely, Edvard is the one to fly the plane. In the meantime Josip forgets beautiful Danica and falls in love with Maria. They become engaged on the New Year's Eve. The weather conditions on the day of flight are favourable, but it turns out that Josip was right. Because of the flat wings the airplane is not stable enough. From the height of 4 meters it crash-lands and breaks into pieces. Josip and Danica run to the place of accident and can't believe their eyes when Edvard, unhurt, creeps out from the wreckage.

8. Father Franc is discontented when his sons start the construction of the third Eda. They've already spent too much money. After ardent dispute he gives up and offers them the last opportunity. But, Eda is not the only thing in their lives. During Josip and Maria's wedding, the mother Grazia gives birth to the youngest brother Carlo.

9. The year of 1910 is also promising for the third rival Ettrich. His flying attempt is rewarding. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire the contest begins for the most successful airplane model, because the army shows an open interest in mass production. On a pleasant summer day in 1910 the newest Eda is ready for a flight. After a very short run Edvard takes off into the sky and the airplane elegantly glides in big circles for a few kilometres. This is a real victory. The brothers are aware of the fact that their success has to be converted into money very quickly. Their father's ultimatum is pressing.



10. The interest in the public presentation is exceptional. There's a large group of people, among which also representatives of the army interested in acquisition of a substantial number of airplanes. The brothers justifiably look forward to a mass production that would solve all their worries. But their fate is unfavourable. First the engine doesn't work properly and Edvard furiously curses the old box. The audience becomes anxious, but there's no way back. Josip is dripping with sweat until he finally repairs the engine. Then the sky becomes dark as black clouds gather above Gorizia. Nevertheless Edvard doesn't hesitate and takes off. But soon after the take off a strong blast of wind switches off the sick engine and after 100 metres the airplane hardly lands on the field with a coughing engine. The spectators boo with indignation and claim their money back. The enraged storm disperses the crowd. Wet and defeated brothers remain alone on the meadow that becomes a muddy field.



11. A strange visitor stops his car in their father's back-yard and invades their lethargy. Wealthy businessman Mihajlo Merćep from Zagreb offers them his co-operation and his money to build a new airplane. They load Eda onto the train, Edvard enters Merćep's car and they drive off to Zagreb.



12. A documentary sequence follows. The archive material (mostly photos and other documents) and telling of relatives and experts present the Rusjan brothers' journey to Zagreb. There, with the help of the businessman Mihajlo Merćep's capital, they build a new airplane and successfully show it in front of a few thousand people. Encouraged by their success and the Serbophile Merćep the brothers want to show their airplane also in Belgrade. Only Edvard and Merćep travel to Belgrade, while Josip returns to Gorizia where his wife Maria is due to give a birth of his first child.

13. It's fiction again. In Gorizia the family awaits Josip in tears. A telegram came from Belgrade. Edvard crash-landed at the confluence of the rivers Sava and Danube. He didn't survive. Josip wants to attend the funeral, but his wife's labour convinces him to stay at home. Only his sister Lojzka sets out on a sad journey. Josip and Maria get a son - Edvard.

14. Josip goes to Argentina taking a small steamship. There he'll join his sister Ana to whom he sent a letter before his departure. After having watched a photo of the falling airplane brought by his sister Lojzka from Belgrade, he thoughtfully observes the horizon of the endless ocean. In "off" we hear the narration, the text of his letter to Ana. He informs her of Edvard's death due to the airplane accident during his flight over thousands of spectators in Belgrade. There the hero Edvard had a majestic funeral. At the same time Josip establishes bitterly that his life story ends in the old and tired Europe. He will soon meet with her in the new and far away world where new challenges and better life are awaiting him for sure.



15. The end of the film is illustrated by a documentary sequence of the flight footage of Eda's replica which was built in 2000. The commentary tells us the story of the Austro-Hungarian aviation pioneer who crash-landed in Serbia under strangely coincidental circumstances. There he posthumously became a myth of the newly forming Yugoslavia. After the breakup of Yugoslavia the Pan-Yugoslavian myth of Edvard Rusjan diminished. Without any ideological connotations Rusjan can finally return to the place from where he took off, to Gorizia. The circle is thus complete.