



ABOVE Incorporating the recently minted UTA's green and blue signature colours, this German-language timetable from April 1965 shows the breadth of the airline's operations, from Los Angeles on the USA's west coast to Johannesburg in South Africa and Sydney in Australia. **LEFT** Douglas DC-8-62 F-BNLE (c/n 45917) was one of two stretched "Super DC-8s" delivered to UTA in 1968; the other was F-BOLF (c/n 45918). F-BNLE became something of a UTA stalwart, serving the airline until its retirement in the early 1980s.

FRENCH WINGS OVER FIVE CONTINENTS

THE STORY OF UTA

PART TWO

The merger of TAI & UAT and into the jet age, 1962–92

MAURICE WICKSTEAD rounds off his history of French independent airline *Union de Transports Aériens* (UTA) and its post-war predecessors *Transports Aériens Intercontinentaux* (TAI) and *Union Aéromaritime de Transport* (UAT) with the merger of the latter two and the subsequent 30 years of operations against strong financial headwinds

BY THE EARLY 1960s the operations of French independent airlines *Transports Aériens Intercontinentaux* (TAI) and *Union Aéromaritime de Transport* (UAT) had become increasingly entwined in Africa, as covered in the first part of this series in *TAH41*. As both were operating Douglas DC-8 jetliners and sharing pooled spares and maintenance resources, the logical way forward was a formal merger, and after lengthy negotiations a protocol was signed in September 1962. Before this could be consummated, however, numerous issues needed to be resolved.

A CHANGING WORLD

Rapid political developments in Africa and the Far East, along with French traffic rights in Australia and the Pacific, plus opposition from Air France, together with rationalisation of TAI and UAT's internal structures, had to be addressed. Thus it was not until October 1, 1963, that a new airline, *Union de Transports Aériens* (UTA), formally came into being. On its inception, the new organisation's assets amounted to about 35.7m francs (around \$7.4m), with shipping company *Chargeurs Réunis* as the largest shareholder, plus a combined staff of around 5,200 and a fleet comprising one Douglas

DC-3, six DC-4s, 13 DC-6s, two DC-7Cs (sold in 1964), six DC-8s and two de Havilland Herons; its route network amounted to some 190,000km (118,000 miles).

In November 1963, following the granting of a seven-year licence to maintain its existing route structure, UTA reached an accord with Air France whereby the former would give up its services to North Africa, Djibouti, Madagascar and Senegal as well as its stake in Air Madagascar. In return, Air France transferred 50 per cent of its holding in *Société pour le Développement du Transport Aérien en Afrique* (SODETRAF) to UTA, allowing closer cooperation with Air Afrique. Although from April 1965 Air France began co-operating with Alitalia, Lufthansa and Japan Air Lines over routes to the Far East, joint UTA/Air France services were still timetabled. While the latter pair had all but parted company in Africa at the end of 1965, both agreed to share commercial representation and the common use of infrastructure elements. Finally conceding the complementary, rather than competitive, role of private operators alongside the state carrier, French authorities granted UTA a 20-year franchise in December 1965, enabling the airline to plan for long-term investment.

Unfortunately the prospects offered by the