

One Decisive Moment Of CAT Case Today

ONE/UNKNOWN

13 JUN 1968

One decisive moment of the CAT air crash case comes at the Taipei District Court at 5 p.m. or shortly after it today -- just a few hours less than 101 days of the accident near Linkou that rainy dark evening.

An injection of what has been termed as "threat" coming from international aviation sources last weekend added heat of intensity over the fate of Captains Stuart E. Dew and Hugh H. Hicks and possibly the fate of airline pilots who may ... just in case encounter similar happenings over Taiwan.

Observers have noted that the court people must have been squeezing their brains hard over the past week deciding on a sentence for the two Civil Air Transport pilots of American nationality. Strain must have been particularly heavy in the last two days following foreign press reports quoting President Jan Bartelski of the International Federation of the Airline Pilots Associations in the Hague as saying this:

IALPA Voice

If Chinese authorities should not meet IALPA's petition to suspend court proceedings and reopen investigation by civil aviation authorities and if the two pilots are convicted, airline pilots "of course would obviously be afraid to fly into Taipei and very likely they will boycott the place."

The common international practice is to revoke the license of a pilot if he is responsible for a plane crash. By prosecuting the two CAT pilots, the Republic of China has shattered all international precedents, it has been noted here.

Other experts, however, have pointed out that the Feb. 16 accident does not exactly fall under any of the three "normal" crash patterns:

3 Patterns

-- In most air crashes, all aboard planes are killed.

-- Many air crashes are caused by faulty instruments on planes or on grounds. (The defense in the present case denies error on the part of the pilots and has declared they believe the mishap was because of faulty instrument landing system operated by the Chinese Civil Aeronautics Administration. But CAA has maintained a different view.)

-- Some air crashes are caused by uncontrollable circumstances like heart failure on the part of pilots.

Local Views

While many Chinese quarters were heard expressing regret over IALPA moves (they say the federation's attempt obviously was intended to influence the judges), many other quarters were heard saying that nothing minus absolute facts and truth and careful checking against the law should be allowed.

Although it is generally believed that the judges will

not be affected by any external persuasion or pressure, fear also has been expressed that the statement from The Hague would have a bearing on the public attitude after a verdict -- whether innocent or guilty -- is passed down this afternoon.

If the pilots are found not guilty, some people may tend to think that the judges were influenced by the federation move. If the verdict is to the opposite, people may still say the sentence was influenced by the federation move... in a manner contradictory to

the federation's "anticipation," if there was any such anticipation.

Calmer observers have pointed out--and what they say is a common-sense matter --that all factors should be carefully weighed before a final decision is reached and that all such "evidences" should be made public so that there will be no misunderstanding of any kind on the part of any one.

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REMARKS:

See page 4 - most unfortunate IALPA had to speak publicly at the critical moment - otherwise an acquittal was likely on 27th (my own personal opinion - others may not agree). Now, attitudes may harden.

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DATE 27 May 68 FROM

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VI #1623, 1624

NONE/UNKNOWN