

Czech Tells How He Flew To Freedom

He, 4 Pals Beat Off Reds for Air Liner

CPYRGHT

WASHINGTON, Sept. 5 (UPI).—A young Czech, who made a daring escape from communism, has gone to work as a flight engineer for a major United States air line.

Several years ago Mira Slovak was piloting commercial air liners for the Red-run Czechoslovakian government. Though only twenty-two, he was regarded as one of the safest and most reliable pilots. "I was a great believer in flight regulations and a good pilot," said Mr. Slovak in an interview given in fluent, self-taught English.

Politically, the Reds didn't think Mr. Slovak so reliable. As a precaution in late 1951 he was taken off flights destined for points in West Germany and relegated to flying liners with Iron Curtain-only destinations.

Harassed by Reds

For the next twenty months he was intermittently harassed by Communist authorities about the war-time activities of his family. "Each time they seemed to become more suspicious, and I knew time was running out," he said.

So it was as Mr. Slovak raced his DC-3 down the runway at Prague on March 23, 1953, and took off bound for Berno, Czechoslovakia. This was the night for which Mr. Slovak had planned for two years. It was the night he would fly to freedom.

As the plane took off, Mr. Slovak eased up from his first pilot's seat, and told the three fellow crew-members he'd be back shortly with two friends who wanted to see the cockpit.

Twenty-five passengers were aboard. Four of them had planned with Mr. Slovak for the escape. There were five Communist party members aboard. That meant trouble for any escape effort.

But Mr. Slovak had concealed five loaded pistols in the rear wall of the cabin. Two friends came back with him to the cabin. Two stayed with the passengers.

Quickly Mr. Slovak handed them the pistols. "I told the pilot what was happening, and he began to fight," he related. "My two friends weren't as considerate. They knocked the two other crewmen unconscious and quickly pulled the pilot away and gave him a good thrashing."

Mr. Slovak took the controls. For sixty minutes he piloted the plane 140 miles over the Czech-

oslovakian countryside, never flying higher than 150 feet.

As they approached West Germany the five Reds rushed the locked cabin door. Mr. Slovak sent the plane into sharp dips and turns, throwing the Communists to the floor five times. Then they gave up.

Mr. Slovak and his four friends received asylum in the United States. The others flew to London. Mr. Slovak worked for the Central Intelligence Agency for a year. Then Bill Boeing, of the Boeing

aircraft family, hired him to pilot his three private planes.

Mr. Boeing introduced Mr. Slovak to power boats three years ago, and last year he dare-deviled his way to the top international boat-racing.

Now's he's finishing a refresher course with Capital Airlines on flight engineering.

He will drive bandleader Guy Lombardo's hydroplane. "Miss Bardahl," in the President's cup competition on the Potomac. The winner visits the President at the White House to receive the trophy.