

Honor To Pilots

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

If you try to keep fairly close tabs on the acceleration of the skyjacking menace --- the killers who sneak through, the death machines on board, the planes snatched, the passengers and members of crew threatened, wounded, and killed, and the scores of proposals for curbing outrages aloft --- you will soon find that you have backed into a strenuous and demanding hobby. Air hijacking is 40 years old. The horrifying practice get fresh impetus 11 years ago when homesick Cubans began to hijack American planes on Miami to Key West flights. And today, with pilot associations taking the unpopular role of leadership against air terrorism --- even if that means paralyzing air traffic temporarily --- opinion seems certain to harden.

Four years ago, when Arabs stole a \$6,000,000 El Al plane on a regularly-scheduled flight, it was the International Federation of Airline

Pilots Associations that demanded the release of the plane, her crew of 10 and her 12 Israeli passengers, held captive in Algeria while 19 non-Israeli passengers were flown on to Paris. The pilots were furious over this example of Arab racism and reacted as free and brave men are expected to act. Today, in the courageous stand of Captain Ola Forsberg, president of the same top pilots' groups, we are seeing continuation of a laudable thrust against injustice.

Once more Algeria is in the hijacking news, and on the wrong side. Algeria stood by the Arab pirates in the 1968 incident and now seems determined not to extradite William Holder, who, with a woman companion, snatched a Western Airlines plane out of Seattle recently, picked up \$500,000 in ransom and found what seems to be a hero's welcome 7200 air miles later in Algeria.

So the world should by now have received some idea of the identity of those individuals and nations participating in and condoning modern sky crimes. Applause for the aggressions, shelter for the plane stealers and gloating over such murderous business are recorded time after time.

Much in mind currently is the example of Radio Cairo and two major Cairo dailies, Al Ahram and Al-Goumhuria, in calling the May 30 assassinations of 14 Puerto Ricans and 12 other travelers at Lydda Airport, Tel Aviv, "a brilliant surprise feat." Egypt's Premier Aziz Sidky, saw the Lydda massacre only as a daring operation, proof certain that the Arabs could lick the Israelis.

Members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine exulted; and Lebanon, which obviously has been reluctant to root out Arab guerrilla nests and outlaw training grounds for skyjackers, had to start thinking about reprisals from an outraged Israel.

After the men who fly planes in international traffic give the world the proper example for mobilizing opinion against skyjacking, what hope is there for improvement? The best hope is for more determination on the part of the International Civil Aviation Organization, affiliated with the United Nations. At the same level, an anxious world looks on UN Secretary General Waldheim to stop quibbling in his nego-

tiations with the pilots and to try to wade through Arab and Russian intransigence in the UN to obtain agreement on sanctions against pirates in the sky and murderers who fish weapons out of their luggage in airports.

The boycotting of airports in nations abetting hijackers, drastic proposals such as that now before the U.S. Congress calling for the end of U.S. aid to any country harboring terrorist groups, the training and use of hundreds of additional sky marshals, and a stepped-up search for weapon-detecting devices in airports should help.

Meanwhile, all honor to the pilots. They seem best to understand the immorality and unacceptability of the practice of killing innocent air travelers --- crimes committed by contemptible nationalists who mix a mad brew of international politics and terrorism in a dangerous age.

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