

## The Croatians' Cause

To the Editor:

As the trial of the Croatian sky-jackers proceeds, it is an urgent matter that the press, radio and TV not be victimized and used as organs of propaganda by the Government of Yugoslavia.

In Croatia, a nation of some 4.4 million people, one fifth the population of Yugoslavia, more than 1.5 million people have been exterminated or imprisoned since Tito assumed power. Today concentration camps and political prisons dot the landscape—to name a few: Goli Otok, an island of rock in the Adriatic; Zenica in Bosnia; Celovina; Lepoglava; Stara Gradiska; Foca; Svetgrgur; Stolac; Srijemska Mitrovica—all places noted for the physical torture of political prisoners.

Apart from the hundreds of thousands of political victims, Tito's Government has imprisoned thousands of priests and executed more than 600 members of the Croatian Catholic clergy as well as Protestant Bishop Pop, Patriarch of the Croatian Orthodox Church, and the leader of the Zagreb Moslems, Muftic. Cardinal Stepinac, saved from execution by world opinion, was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment at hard labor.

For years there has been a major worldwide propaganda effort by Belgrade to portray Croations as "extremists," "terrorists," "criminals and

bandits," "Ustashi-facists," and "Nazi-collaborators." The primary sources for this propaganda are Tanjug, the Yugoslav Propaganda Ministry press releases, wire service reports usually based on Tanjug reports and Yugoslav Information Centers.

Following demonstrations of 30,000 Croatian students in December of 1971, Tito sent in Serbian police units to make mass arrests. In 1972 the International League for the Rights of Man stated: "Altogether, 16,000 former party members, writers, elementary school teachers, university professors, newsmen, TV commentators, some priests—all Croatians—were arrested, tried, again arrested, released for a while, and again rearrested."

Despite \$6 billion in U.S. aid, Belgrade always opposes us in the U.N., promotes revolution in Puerto Rico and Central America, harasses American-Croatian citizens and lets the Soviet fleet use its ports.

With no intention to injure anyone, five skyjackers now face death sentences as a result of their attempt to get some facts published in the press. We will shortly face a post-Tito crisis. Perhaps we can no longer afford an amoral and expedient foreign policy that supports Belgrade.

DAVID ALDRICH  
New York, Sept. 27, 1976

The writer is legal counsel to the accused.

# Judge Moderates Prison Sentences Of '76 Hijackers

By WOLFGANG SAXON

A Federal judge in Brooklyn, who had sentenced four Croatian nationalists to up to life in prison for the 1976 hijacking of an American airliner, yesterday declared them eligible for parole after Dec. 31. A New York City bomb squad officer was killed trying to dismantle a bomb left behind by the hijackers, who hoped to dramatize demands for Croatian independence from Yugoslavia.

Over the objections of the prosecution, Judge John R. Bartels of Eastern District Court found that the defendants had shown "exemplary adjustment" in Federal detention since their sentencing in July 1977 and he granted a defease motion for modified sentences.

The defendants are Zvonko Busic, the 29-year-old leader of the hijackers; his wife, Julienne; Petar Matanic and Frane Pesut. The Busics had been found guilty by a Federal court jury in May 1977 on three counts of air piracy resulting in a death, air piracy and conspiracy, while the other two defendants were found guilty only of air piracy and conspiracy.

In imposing sentence two months later, Judge Bartels meted out mandatory life terms for the Busics and made Mr. Busic eligible for parole in 10 years and his wife in 8 years. The other two men were given 30-year-terms and ordered to serve 10 years before becoming eligible for parole.

A fifth defendant in the hijacking, Mark Vlasic, had pleaded guilty to a charge of air piracy before the others went on trial and received a 30-year sentence. He was not involved in yesterday's proceedings.

### Chicago-Bound Plane Seized

The group seized control of a Trans World Airlines plane bound from La Guardia Airport for Chicago on Sept. 10, 1976. The jet, carrying more than 50 passengers and crew, was over Buffalo when the group threatened to blow it up and forced the pilot to head for Montreal and eventually on to Paris, where the hijackers were arrested.

While their hostages were released unharmed, a 27-year-old police officer, Brian Murray, was killed and three fellow officers were injured in New York. They had been sent to Grand Central Terminal to disarm a bomb after the hijackers, still in flight, had informed authorities that it had been left there in a locker.

Judge Bartels's action before an overflow courtroom audience, consisting largely of supporters of the Croatian cause, followed a strong denunciation by the judge of what he described as the defendants' abuse of this country's hospitality and laws.

At the same time, Judge Bartels noted that the Busics had set up a trust fund for the two children of Officer Murray with \$4,000 received from their sympathizers, and that they had promised to support the fund with up to 10 percent of their earnings once they left prison.



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# Belgrade Attacks U.S. In Hijacking Aftermath

By Michael Getler

Washington Post Foreign Service

BELGRADE, Sept. 12—The Yugoslav government, miffed over the publicity given the anti-Tito extremists who hijacked a TWA jet Friday, has indirectly issued a sharp blast at what it calls "very powerful and influential reactionary U.S. circles" that oppose friendly relations with Yugoslavia.

The attack came in an editorial by the diplomatic correspondent of the official Tanjug news agency, which normally reflects Foreign Ministry positions.

The article appears to represent a further deterioration in official U.S.-Yugoslav relations, which have been worsening for the past few months.

The language in the editorial, especially its references to alleged "reactionary circles," struck observers here as closely resembling the wording of President Tito's highly unusual personal criticism late in July of the U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, Laurence H. Silberman.

Tito's attack followed Silberman's successful efforts to gain the release of a Yugoslav-born U.S. citizen—Laszlo Toth—who had been jailed on a charge of spying.

Though the White House has already said that the hijackers—emigres from the Yugoslav republic of Croatia—will be brought to justice, this did not seem to satisfy the government here.

The editorial claimed the hijacking "is just one in a carefully planned series of acts" designed to cause the friendly course of relations adopted by the Ford administration "to be reconsidered".

The news agency also characterized "the immense coverage in the information media" of the hijacking incident as part of the plot aimed at jeopardizing Yugoslav prestige. Four major U.S. newspapers, as part of hijackers' demands, printed lengthy texts of Croatian attacks on Tito and his policies. The newspapers included The Washington Post.

Tuesday, September 14, 1976

## YUGOSLAVIA ASSAILS U.S. ON JET HIJACKING

Says F.B.I.'s Yielding to Terrorist  
Demand to Distribute Statement  
to Press Was 'Unfriendly Act'

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE

Special to The New York Times

BELGRADE, Sept. 13 — Yugoslavia, which has demanded American action against Yugoslav dissidents living in the United States, charged through its controlled press and broadcasts today that American "elements" were involved in the Croatian hijacking of an American airliner Friday.

Apart from attacks on the United States in the press here, the Yugoslav Government has submitted at least one high-level protest to Washington. Belgrade complained that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had not only failed to stop the terrorists, but had also complied with a terrorist demand that anti-Belgrade statements be distributed to American newspapers for publication.

The Yugoslav Government has officially described this as an "unfriendly act," a harsh diplomatic phrase that in other situations in other countries has sometimes led to a break in diplomatic relations.

The Government news agency Tanjug set the tone in an editorial saying:

"Plane hijacking in the United States is one of a series of anti-Yugoslav actions programmed by U. S. reactionary quarters, which oppose the development of friendly relations between the U. S. and Yugoslavia."

### Enmity to Nonaligned Cited

The Communist Party newspaper Borba asserted that the hijacking, which was carried out by six Croatian separatists from La Guardia Airport in New York, was part of an American campaign to sabotage the work of "non-aligned" nations.

The hijacking ended in Paris Saturday when the Croatian terrorists surrendered to the French police without harming the plane or the passengers on board. A bomb they had left in Grand Central Terminal exploded while being examined by the New York police, however, killing one policeman.

Yugoslavia has warned the United States that there is little chance of an improvement in relations between the two countries unless Washington complies with long-standing Yugoslav demands to move against Yugoslav critics of President Tito's Government living in America.

Specifically, Yugoslavia has long sought an exchange of information and cooperation with the F.B.I. in running down Yugoslav dissidents, an arrangement that Belgrade has achieved in West Germany and has sought in other countries, notably Australia and Canada.

Among the millions of Yugoslavs living abroad, many bitterly oppose the Belgrade Government, and among them dozens of emigre political organizations flourish. Some are terrorist, but most believe in peaceful political tactics.