

NITTMANN ARTICLE ON HELICOPTER INCIDENT

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[Rudolf Nittmann Article: "On the Investigation of the Lipno Piratical Action; Responsibility for Gangsterism"]

[Text] Yesterday we published a report on the conclusion of the investigation into the piratical action of American pilot Barry Meeker on the Lipno Lake on 17 August this year and on the presentation of the case to the prosecutor's office, which will deal with it further. However, at the same time yesterday a CTK report arrived from Bonn saying that the investigation in the FRG will not be concluded before the beginning of October.

These two preliminary facts are typical of the different approaches to the investigation of the gross violation of the Czechoslovak state border and of CSSR territorial sovereignty by a helicopter piloted by B. Meeker, who carried out his bandit-like assault from FRG territory. In the course of the investigation, which was held between 18 August and 3 September, our organs interrogated dozens of eyewitnesses of this piratical assault, considered statements by experts and carried out verification tests including the reconstruction of the whole affair. On the FRG side this piratical action is being investigated by the prosecutor's office in Traunstein, but--as one learns from the announcement of the Bavarian Justice Ministry replying to a question posed by one deputy--we still have to wait for the conclusion of the investigation.

The wounded B. Meeker, who was shot by members of the CSSR border guards returning Meeker's fire, was transported to an unknown destination after being treated in the Traunstein hospital, allegedly to "safeguard him from newsmen." But B. Meeker was hidden to "safeguard" him from revealing to the public details on the flight and the organizers of the kidnappings, of his piratical flights to Czechoslovakia and how these piratical operations were carried out with the assent and knowledge of appropriate FRG military and security organs.

During the investigation our organs fully proved that B. Meeker's low-altitude flight (aviation regulations set the minimum flight altitude over a populated area at 300 meters and over a recreation area such as Lipno even higher) and shots from onboard the helicopter, when he knew he was in a densely populated area, seriously endangered human lives. The Bavarian ministry, even before the investigation is concluded, is justifying this air pirate--it is denying that B. Meeker was armed during the violation of the Czechoslovak sovereign territory. They are not even accusing him of violating the air space of two states which are neighbors of the FRG--Czechoslovakia and Austria.

The Bavarian ministry is trying in advance to lessen B. Meeker's guilt for violating laws on air transport, and for carrying out his piratical action of kidnaping people in a helicopter devoid of identification markings. For such a violation of law he is allegedly in no danger of being severely punished.

Of course the prosecutor's office in Traunstein, the Bavarian Justice Ministry and the Bonn authorities completely ignore other facts--particularly the fact of the organized kidnaping of people carried out by the West Berlin firm of K. Mierendorf, but also by other similar FRG firms, because the piratical flights were not B. Meeker's own job and private undertaking. They also ignore the official CSSR protest note and the gross violation of CSSR territorial sovereignty and international law that the international public and legal experts explicitly point out.

In such a confrontation of procedures in the investigation of this international gangsterism in our country and in the FRG it is proper to reiterate demands voiced officially as well as by our working people that the culprits be severely punished, and that the FRG Government take steps so that this action could never again be repeated.