

Experts Become Concerned Over Investigations of Air Crashes

By ROBERT J. SERLING
UPI Aviation Editor

Washington—(UPI)—Air experts are becoming increasingly concerned over aviation's most vital single safety function—the investigation of crashes.

The concern is three-fold:—There is too much feuding, buck-passing and dodging of responsibility in solving accidents.

—Every air crash should teach a lesson but there is some evidence the lessons are not always applied.

—Too frequently the emphasis is on attaching blame rather than taking action to prevent recurrences.

The federal agency charged with determining the cause of civilian crashes is the Civil Aeronautics Board, The CAB's bureau of safety, which has about 100 investigators, is the unit entrusted with this task.

There is little tendency to criticize the CAB or its bureau of safety, which most observers agree has done a remarkable job under trying circumstances. But throughout the aviation industry and within the CAB itself, some sharp questions are being asked about the future of accident investigation.

The plain truth is that crashes are getting harder to solve in this fifth year of the jet age. Planes fly higher and faster. This means wreckage can be scattered over wider areas. Planes carry more fuel. This means destruction by fire is more complete than ever before. Planes are far more complicated—actually a safety factor but one that magnifies the scope of almost every accident investigation.

One of the chief difficulties is that the CAB literally wears two hats. It tries to solve the crash but in doing so it fixes responsibility—and on the latter may hinge millions of dollars in lawsuits. Claims against the airlines and manufacturers involved in just two Electra crashes totaled \$55 million.

This has resulted in accident hearings being "adversary proceedings" rather than an objective, impartial search for the truth. Jerome Lederer, director of the highly-regarded flight safety foundation, recently summed up the solu-

tion: "The airlines, manufacturers and even the government can be expected to protect and defend their special interests under conditions of accident investigation which, while intended to bring out the facts to prevent a recurrence of the accident, are in actuality later used to assess blame."

"Hearings conducted in a climate of tension, antagonism and publicity are not conducive to the free, frank disclosure of evidence. A climate of quiet, dignified objectivity might be more productive, especially if the legal obstacles could be reduced."

Melvin Gough, who once headed the CAB's bureau of safety, agrees.

"Air crash investigators encounter certain barriers to

information," he said in a speech just before he left office. "Manufacturers and other parties frequently are reluctant to talk to investigators because of the possibility of later damage suits."

The Air-Line Pilots association (ALPA) for years has felt that fixing blame rather than instituting reforms is the heart of the investigative problem. ALPA, for example, concedes that pilot error is a major source of accidents. But ALPA also believes the CAB does not always look for the reasons why pilots make mistakes.

Too often, ALPA says, pilots are trapped into fatal errors by factors beyond their control—inadequate airport facilities, poor cockpit design, obsolete navigation and lighting aids, or marginal federal

regulations, to cite a few. Jealousy between the two government air agencies also is believed to have hampered crash investigation. A long-simmering feud between the CAB and the Federal Aviation Agency has exploded in the open on recent occasions. There are some men in the CAB's bureau of safety who fear the FAA wants to take over accident investigation—which FAA administrator Naebe E. Halaby heatedly denies.

CAB Chairman Alan S. Boyd, a close friend of Halaby, also denies a serious feud exists. Perhaps there is harmony at the upper echelons, but in the rank and file of the two agencies there is friction.

The feud has died down

considerably in the past few weeks. But it still smolders and is one of the reasons why some experts have proposed a brand new, independent agency to handle accident investigation. One proponent is former FAA Chief Elwood R. Quesada. He argues that the CAB's preoccupation with airline economic matters has in effect destroyed its objectivity in solving crashes.

But the feeling is that the CAB is perfectly qualified to continue in charge, provided reforms are made. What reforms? Here are some of the proposals being considered.

—Lederer of the Flight Safety Foundation has recommended formation of an elite corps of international accident specialists, carefully picked and trained, with worldwide

laboratory facilities at their disposal. He said air travel is global, that lessons can be learned from any crash, no matter where it happens. The CAB, in effect, would be a part of the corps.

—ALPA is suggesting that the CAB's system of appointing "teams" to crash probes be extended into the actual writing of the final report. The teams include pilots, the airline and the manufacturer of the plane involved in the crash, the FAA and other interested parties.

ALPA feels that the CAB,

which draws heavily on such teams in the early phase of an investigation, also should consult them during the process of analyzing evidence. This, the pilots' union believes, would end much of the bickering and argument that often follows a CAB report.

—The CAB and FAA are seriously considering setting up a school for accident investigators. FAA also has offered to put its vast communications network and its sizeable fleet of fast planes at CAB's disposal. The board has

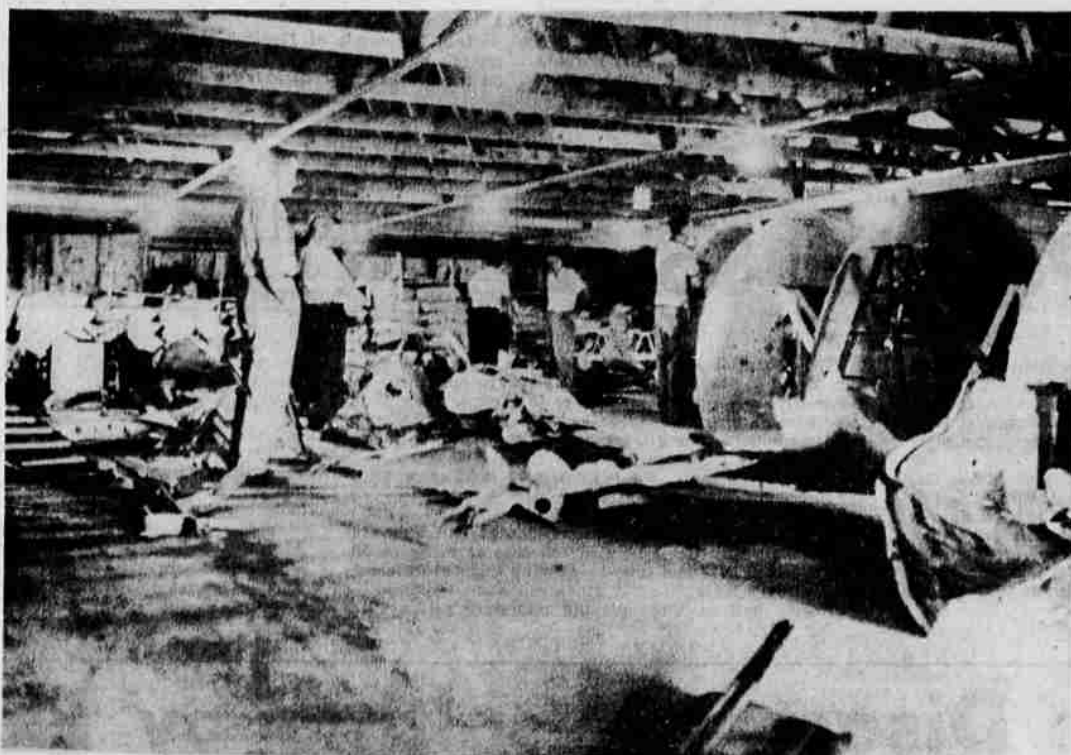
only one air craft, an aerocommander, and frequently has been criticized for not getting to accident sites soon enough. This is one reason FAA officials "get into the act" and into public print so often with comments on possible causes.

—Some experts urge that a specific liability limit be put on airline accidents, such as a flat \$25,000 or even \$50,000 payment to survivors of crash victims. The amount, they say, should be large enough to provide ample protection

but not so generous as to defeat the purpose of the proposal—to reduce the expensive avalanche of legal claims which so obviously play a major role in accident investigations.

Finally, there is another proposal—from Lederer—which is so logically simple that one wonders why nobody thought of it years ago:

Paint the inside of an aircraft structure with different colors, so in the event of a crash the pieces can be identified more easily and reconstructed more quickly.



RECONSTRUCT AIRCRAFT—The federal agency charged with determining the cause of civilian crashes is the Civil Aeronautics Board. The CAB's bureau of safety, which has about 100 investigators, is the unit entrusted with this task. Here, CAB experts earlier this year are shown at the pains-

taking task of reconstructing a mock-up of the rear one-third of Continental Airlines jetliner which crashed near Centerville, Iowa, May 22. CAB officials said cause was an explosion in the tail section. Bits of wreckage (on floor) will be hung on wood framework, at right. (UPI)

Pressure Against Catholics in Poland Stepped Up by Gomulka

By K. C. THALER
United Press International
London—(UPI)—The Communist regime of party chief Wladyslaw Gomulka has stepped up pressure against the Catholic church in Poland, ending a temporary lull in state-church conflicts.

The Warsaw authorities, apparently perturbed by the inroads of Catholicism in the country, have moved to limit still further religious education of the youth. For its part the church is hitting back against the "nibbling away" of its remaining privileges. It has the determined leadership of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński.

Signs are that the fight between the government and the Catholic church is entering a new and important stage.

Two weeks ago the Polish government authorities closed a number of convents and church-run nurseries in the Warsaw area, evicting nuns and children from their homes.

The cardinal at once protested the action in a letter read from Catholic pulpits throughout the Warsaw diocese. But the Communist move was followed by a further government decision to take over, within a year, all schools and orphanages in the country run by nuns and monks.

The new decisions constitute a heavy encroachment on the special position the church has held so far in Poland. Some reports suggest the government in effect seeks to terminate the privileged position of the church.

The main struggle has shifted to the field of education, with the Communist authorities apparently anxious to narrow the influence of the church over Poland's youth since they have failed to win over the older generation to atheism.

The campaign has been a slow and cautious one, in line with the "privileged" position the church has been allowed in Poland, alone among the satellite countries in East Europe.

Fifteen years of Communism have not destroyed religion in Poland and, according to available information reaching the West, there is still more religious freedom in Poland than

exists in most of the satellite states.

Religious services are continuing throughout the country and churches are packed. The state has contributed to the maintenance of church buildings as historic monuments, but it has blocked the building of new ones in many cases.

Officially, the party is committed to opposing religion but it moves carefully in the face of deep rooted religious feelings of the population.

The struggle dates back to 1945 when the regime first prohibited teachers other than clergy to teach religion. This was fairly effective at the time because there were not enough clergymen to do the job.

The church's situation improved under the first church-state accord of April 14, 1950. Under the government, in exchange for an agreement that the church would not be used for anti-state purposes, pledged it would not "introduce limitations into the present state of religious instruction in school."

But in September, 1953, Cardinal Wyszyński was sent to prison in the wake of the Stalinist tightening of the screw everywhere behind the iron curtain. Religious instruction was systematically cut down or altogether barren throughout the country.

The "thaw" and the aftermath of the Hungarian revolt brought a new state-church agreement, negotiated by Gomulka and the Cardinal, which again permitted religious education during school hours but only at the express request of the parents.

The overwhelming majority wanted it, leaving only some 60 schools in 1957 without religious instruction.

Since then, administrative pressures and practices gradually have again narrowed religious education opportunities.

The truce was interrupted formally in February, 1959, when the finance minister suspended a number of tax concessions to the church. The state began to reexamine the status of church property in the former German territories, and the clergy was in-

formed its members could no longer enjoy the privilege of exemption from military service.

Last year a formal ban was imposed on all religious instruction in schools. Priests were ordered to register their classes held in churches, and submit lists of children attending them. The majority of priests refused to comply with the registration order.

The church is now fighting the latest attack on voluntary religious instruction outside schools. But the government has not retreated although it promises that the take-over of religious schools will be carried out "with gentleness and tact."

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