

Release of U.S. airmen may mean easing of political kidnappings

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS captive U.S. airmen will arouse breaking after a contagion of political kidnappings around the world. Like air hijacking, political kidnapping became a popular terrorist weapon against establishments. Now that energetic measures have been taken in many countries, air hijacking seems on the wane. Britain's Scotland Yard says hijacking is now old hat as a revolutionary tactic. It has appeared that political kidnapping would replace hijacking as the favorite device of urban guerrillas, especially in Latin America. Since September 1969, there have been a score of abductions. Some were failures, but enough of them were spectacularly successful to inspire imitation elsewhere. Some terrorists succeeded when governments bowed to their threats to kill the victims. In this way scores of political prisoners were freed and flown out of the countries of their imprisonment. Guerrilla organizations have raked in ransom money. Three victims of political kidnappings have been murdered in cases where governments failed to bow. One victim is still missing. Some attempts fizzled completely, as was the case in Turkey, where the government refused to consider a demand of \$400,000 for the four Americans. Who, what and why are the political kidnapers? Their politics vary, but they have some things in common. Usually they belong to tiny extremist groups. They are likely to be young, with the recklessness that youth can command. Often they are university students, or allied with them. On the left they tend to be far-out extremists worshipping at the altar of Mao Tse-tung and constant violence. On the right they may be somewhat older, embittered men remembering dictatorships in which they could hope to share in power and spoils. All seem to claim idealism of sorts. Some are separatists seeking to break away from a central government. Some are far-out radicals seeking complete overturn of political systems. More often than not, the aim is power or at least a voice of authority. The kidnap weapon is used to get terrorists out of prison, to finance revolution and to build up arsenals. Particularly on the extreme left, the ends are used to justify the means. Some, as in Brazil, claim to be answering terror with terror, responding to an oppressive government and defending revolutionary brethren subjected to imprisonment and allegedly tortured. Some as in Guatemala, claim to fight "Yankee imperialism." Altogether, they have made diplomacy and the service of one's country abroad a perilous occupation, and have caused governments to invoke the most stringent security measures.

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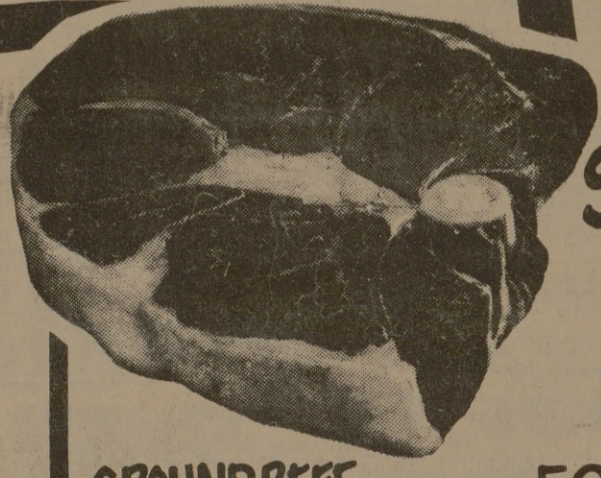
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