

RUNWAY SLUSH 'CAUSED MUNICH CRASH' SCIENTISTS SUPPORT PILOT

REGINALD PECK
Daily Telegraph Staff Correspondent

MUNICH, Thursday.

SCIENTISTS from the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Bedford today told a German inquiry that runway slush was the sole cause of the Munich air disaster of February, 1958.

An earlier German inquiry had found that ice on the wings of the British European Airways Elizabethan airliner caused. The crash, which killed 23 people, including eight Manchester United footballers.

Following this Capt. James Thain, the plane's commander, who had not examined the wings for icing, was dismissed by B E A and lost his flying licence. RUNWAY SLUSH 'CAUSED MUNICH CRASH'

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Cause, not blame

Dr. Hermann Rupprecht, chairman of the new inquiry, explained that it was concerned with the causes of the crash only and not with blame.

Describing tests at Bedford. Mr. BRADBURY ILLINGWORTH, one of the British experts, said: "The effect of even extreme icing on the aircraft was very small compared with the effect of the slush." Icing would not have been sufficient to prevent the aircraft leaving the ground.

Capt. Thain's evidence had been that there was a drop in speed from 117 to 105 knots while the airliner was on the second half of the runway.

"At 105 knots indicated airspeed, the aircraft could not have taken off even with a clear wing, and it would not be necessary to assume there was ice on the wing to explain the accident," Mr. Illingworth said.

"Heavy punishment"

Capt. THAIN, who is now 45 and a poultry farmer in Berkshire, spoke today of the "heavy punishment" he had suffered since the first German inquiry.

He claimed to have obeyed all British Government regulations on the duties of an aircraft captain. If BEA had other regulations, he still claimed the right as captain to "direct my crew to act as I wish."

This was an apparent reference not to the de-icing regulation but to a second B A standing rule that the captain "must occupy the left-hand seat in the cockpit on take off. At the time of the crash this was occupied by Capt. Rayment, who was killed.

The inquiry, which is expected to last two days, will continue tomorrow.