

A Top Heroin Smuggler Is Given 20-Year Sentence, the Maximum

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Auguste Joseph Ricord, whom the Government called the largest trafficker in heroin ever brought to trial in the United States, received the maximum 20-year prison sentence in Federal Court yesterday for conspiracy to smuggle narcotics.

Ricord, a 62-year-old Argentine citizen of Corsican extraction, had been found guilty at a jury trial last month. The small, bald restaurateur, known as Monsieur André, had been accused of being the mastermind of a many-tentacled ring operating from his Paris-Nice motel-restaurant on the outskirts of Asunción, Paraguay.

In imposing the harshest sentence he could, Judge M. Cannella noted that Ricord was not an addict or a pusher accused of making a few sidewalk sales.

Suffering and Death

"This is a sale of a very large quantity of heroin," the judge said. "The end product in suffering and mortality from this quantity would probably equal the recent figures given for the war in Vietnam."

Walter M. Phillips Jr., an assistant United States attorney in charge of the narcotics unit in the Southern District of New York, said that Ricord's rings were responsible for bringing in at least 2,000 pounds of pure heroin a year into the United States.

Mr. Phillips said he had evidence that, in the three years before his arrest in 1971, Ricord had changed between \$350,000 and \$400,000 from American to Paraguayan currency at just one of the exchange shops he used in Asunción.

In addition to the 20-year

prison sentence, Judge Cannella imposed a \$20,000 fine—the maximum under the law—and directed Ricord to pay the costs of prosecution.

Ricord Questions Locale

In a statement before sentencing, Ricord said that he had never been in the United States until his extradition from Paraguay last September. "It is entirely possible that I never committed any offense in the territory of the United States," he said, consulting handwritten notes.

Ricord said that in his years in the restaurant business "some traffickers" had been among his customers. "But I never, never was an accomplice to anybody," he said. He said he was a "victim of an intrigue," which he did not specify. He also said he was sick with kidney stones, ulcers and diabetes.

Ricord's lawyer, Herbert I. Handman, said in his plea that his client had a "complex and difficult background" because he had "grown up in Europe in the turmoil of war."

Marseilles Background

The records show that Ricord began his career as a small-time hoodlum and pimp in Marseilles and was an agent of the French Gestapo during World War II. He fled to Latin America after the war and, it is believed, began his narcotics activities in the nineteen-fifties.

Judge Cannella was critical of the presentence probation report prepared for Ricord. He noted that it leaned heavily on an interview the probation officer had with Nathan Adams, an investigative reporter for the Reader's Digest who has done more than a year's research on



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Auguste Joseph Ricord

Ricord. His 30-page article, "The Hunt for Andre," is to appear in the March issue of the magazine.

The judge said that he did not think the interview was proper material for a probation report, and that he was ignoring that portion of it in fixing the sentence. Mr. Adams, who works in Washington, said that he had given his information to the authorities because he felt strongly about the case and Ricord's implication in it.