

Tensions are created primarily by governments and individuals that are ruthless in seeking greater and more extensive power. Berlin is a tension point because the Kremlin hopes to eliminate it as part of the free world. And the Communist leaders have chosen to exert pressure there at this moment. Naturally they always pick the most awkward situation, the hard-to-defend position, as the place to test our strength and to try our resolution. There will never be an easy place for us to make a stand, but there is a best one.

That best one is where principle points. Deep in that principle is the truth that we cannot afford the loss of any free nation, for whenever freedom is destroyed anywhere we are ourselves, by that much, weakened. Every gain of communism makes further defense against it harder and our security more uncertain.

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Note from the Soviet Union to the United States, Protesting High-Level Flights in the Frankfurt-Berlin Air Corridor, April 4, 1959¹

[Unofficial translation]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the instruction of the Soviet Government deems it necessary to bring the following to the notice of the Government of the United States of America.

On March 27 a C-130 type American transport plane, going from West Germany to Berlin along the air corridor lying over the territory of the German Democratic Republic, rose to a height of 7,000 meters, which is a crude violation of the existing procedure of flights along this route. The demonstrative character of this violation is evident from the very fact that the American representative in the Berlin Air Safety Center, which regulates flights of foreign airplanes between Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany, was informed in good time by the Soviet side about the inadmissibility of the flight of the said plane at a height of more than 3,050 meters, which is the maximum for flights of the Western powers using the air corridors. Moreover, this same airplane, completing on the same day a return trip from Berlin to West Germany, again flew at a height twice exceeding the usual ceiling of flights in the air corridors, although a protest was made by the official Soviet representative to the U.S. representative against the violation of flight rules which had taken place.

One cannot help noting that the violations by American planes of the existing procedure and established practice of flights over the territory of the German Democratic Republic are undertaken at that moment when agreement has been reached concerning the carrying out soon of negotiations between East and West on the question of Berlin and other questions having prime significance for the cause of peace. All this is taking place after the U.S. Government through its Ambassador in Moscow declared at the time of the transmittal of the note on the question of the planned negotiations that in its opinion unilateral actions of any Government in the period of preparation for the forthcoming conferences will hardly help their successful

¹ *Department of State Bulletin*, May 4, 1959, p. 634.

outcome.¹ Analogous statements were made also by the Governments of other powers which are allies of the United States of America in NATO. It would seem that after such statements the Government of the United States of America ought also to have acted accordingly by avoiding everything that could complicate the effectuation of the understanding about the carrying out of the conferences.

In the light of these facts the premeditated violations by American planes of the existing procedure of air communications with Berlin is difficult to evaluate otherwise than as an effort by the U.S. to worsen conditions for the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, if not in general to torpedo the understanding attained about the carrying out of negotiations between East and West.

As for the Soviet Union, for its part not only will nothing be permitted which could worsen the situation on the eve of negotiations, but everything is being done to facilitate the conduct of these negotiations. It goes without saying that the Soviet Government has the firm intention right up to these negotiations to adhere to the existing procedure and established practice of communications along the lines of communication between Berlin and West Germany.

In calling the attention of the U.S. Government to the dangerous character of the actions of the American authorities in Germany, the Soviet Government would like to emphasize that the U.S. Government will bear all responsibility for the violation of the conditions of safety of air flights in the airspace of the German Democratic Republic and the possible complications connected with this.

The Soviet Government expresses the hope that the U.S. Government will adopt measures which would exclude the possibility of complications of this type and will for its part facilitate creation of a favorable atmosphere for the conduct of negotiations between East and West on urgent international questions, the solution of which is being awaited by the peoples who are vitally interested in the preservation and strengthening of peace.

Note from the American Embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Rejecting Soviet Efforts to Limit the Height for Flights in the Frankfurt-Berlin Air Corridor, April 13, 1959²

The Embassy of the United States of America has been instructed to reply as follows to the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, No. 25/OSA, dated April 4, 1959 protesting the routine flight of a United States aircraft in the Frankfurt-Berlin air corridor on March 27.

The United States Government rejects the Soviet contention that flights above 10,000 feet are precluded by regulations covering flights in the corridors, and that the flight of the C-130 aircraft in question, duly notified to the Soviet Element in accordance with established practice, constituted a violation of presently existing rules. As stated in letters of June 6 and September 8, 1958 from the United States representative to the Soviet representative in the quadripartite Berlin Air Safety Center, flights by aircraft of the United States do not

¹ Statement made by Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson at the time of delivery of the U.S. note of Mar. 26 regarding the foreign ministers meeting on the problem of Germany.

² Department of State press release 265, April 13, 1959.