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***Soviet Boycott Of Allied Control Council. - Marshal Sokolovsky's, Protest at London Conference on Western Germany. - Continuation of Military Government in U.S. Zone. - Mr. Marshall's Statement. - British Note to Soviet Government. -Soviet Authorities impose Stringent Traffic Regulations between Berlin and Western Zones. - Soviet Officials refused Access to Anglo-American Military Trains. -Anglo-U.S. Rail Traffic from Berlin to Western Germany replaced by Air Services. - Berlin Air Disaster. - BEA Machine collides with Soviet Fighter. - British Representations to Soviet Authorities. -Mr. Bevin's Statement on Berlin Situation.***

The Soviet delegation on the Allied Control Council for Germany, headed by Marshal Sokolovsky, walked out of the Council at its meeting in Berlin on March 20 after accusing the Western Powers of undermining quadripartite control of Germany and of seeking to make the position of the Control Council impossible.

The walk-out arose from a memorandum presented to the Council by Marshal Sokolovsky in connection with the recent London Conference of the Western Powers on Germany (see 9167 A). The memorandum protested at the facts that the conference had been called without the knowledge of the Control Council; complained that the Council had not been informed of the results of the conference despite the fact that it had dealt with such important subjects as the State structure of Germany, control of the Ruler, reparations, and the inclusion of Western Germany in the Marshall plan; emphasised that the questions discussed in London fell within the competence of the Council as the supreme authority for Germany set up by the Allies under the Potsdam Agreement; and called on the American, British, and French representatives to state the directives they had received as a result of the London Conference.

The American, British, and French members of the Control Council (Generals Clay, Robertson, and Koenig), while agreeing that the Soviet request was legitimate, pointed out that that London Conference had made recommendations without taking decisions; stated that they had received no directives as a result of the London Conference; and emphasised that the Council had received no information regarding developments in the Soviet zone of Germany. Marshal Sokolovsky thereupon read a statement which after describing the response to the Soviet request as "unsatisfactory," accused the Western Powers of pursuing a policy directed against the Potsdam Agreement and "contradicting 4-Power decisions and the purposes of the occupation of Germany." "A situation has arisen," said the statement, "in which only the Soviet side can give an account of its activities to the Control Council, whereas the American and British sides refuse to give any account of their actions in the zones of Germany occupied by them. Thus these delegations are tearing up the agreement on control machinery in Germany and are assuming responsibility for breaking up this agreement. By their actions they confirm that

the Control Council actually exists no longer as a supreme authority in Germany exercising quadripartite administration of that country. ... This constitutes one of the most serious violations of the obligations devolving on the British, American, and French authorities in Germany in virtue of the four-Power agreements on the administration of Germany during the occupation period. Hence it is clear that the actions which are being taken now, or will be taken in the future, in the Western zones of Germany in realisation of the unilateral decisions of the London Conference cannot be recognised as lawful."

After reading this statement, Marshal Sokolovsky (chairman of the Council during March) declared that, since the American, British, and French representatives had "refused to give the Council an account of the questions discussed at the London Conference," he saw no purpose in continuing the meeting; he therefore declared the latter closed and, with the other members of the Soviet delegation, left the Council chamber.

Despite the Soviet walk-out, the Soviet Military Government, on March 23, sent out notices convening meetings of the Control Council's sub-committees for the following day. The American, British, and French authorities, however, announced that they could not participate in any further quadripartite meetings (excluding those of the 4-Power *Kommandatura*, which was not affected by the Soviet action and continued to function normally as the Allied administering body for Berlin) until the Council had met to consider the position created by Marshal Sokolovsky's announcement of March 20. On March 30, when the Council was due to have met for a routine meeting, Marshal Sokolovsky made no attempt to convene such a meeting, it being stated in Berlin that the Council would not meet until April 10, when it would be convened by General Clay as chairman for the month.

The U.S. State Dept. announced on March 23 that, in view of the present situation in Germany, the plans (announced on Jan. 27) to turn over the administration of the U.S. zone on July 1 to a civilian agency under the State Dept's surveillance had been abandoned, and that U.S. military control would be continued indefinitely; General Clay, in a statement the following day, said that he had agreed to continue as U.S. Military Governor and would not be retiring on July 1, as had earlier been announced. Mr. Marshall, in a press statement in Washington on March 25, emphasised that the U.S.A. "intends to continue to fulfil its responsibilities as a member of the Control Council and as a joint occupant of the city of Berlin"; he added that for 3 years the U.S. Government had attempted to secure the effective political and economic unification of Germany, declared that these attempts had been frustrated to a large extent by the tactics of the Soviet representative on the Control Council, and said that the Soviet boycott of the Council "could only be construed as an intention, which the U.S.A. does not share, to renounce efforts to obtain 4-Power agreement on policies for Germany." On the same day the French Commandant in Berlin, General Ganeval, declared that a French garrison would remain in Berlin" irrespective of any other events."

The British Government presented a note to the Soviet Government on March 25 which repudiated *in toto* the allegations against the Western Powers made by Marshal Sokolovsky on March 20, and declaring: "In the opinion of H.M. Government,

responsibility for the frustration of their consistent attempts to promote to the greatest possible extent practical co-operation in Germany, directed to the economic recovery and unity of that country on a basis of agreement between the 4 Powers in accordance with the responsibilities laid upon them as occupying Powers, rests clearly on the Soviet Government. The refusal of the Soviet Government to allow those conditions to exist in Germany which are essential for the well-being of Europe has been amply demonstrated by their actions in the Control Council and the Council of Foreign Ministers, and in all aspects of their policy of political and economic discrimination in the Soviet zone."

The Anglo Soviet zonal frontier, showing communication between Berlin and the British zone.—(By permission of *The Times*)

The Soviet Military Government informed the U.S., British, and French authorities in Berlin on March 31 that, as from April 1, new and more stringent traffic regulations would come into force with respect to road and rail traffic between the Western zones and Berlin. It was stated that nationals of the Western Powers, whether military or civilian, would, with their families, have to present documents certifying their identity and the fact that they belonged to the Allied administration in Berlin; that these documents must be presented at the frontiers of the Soviet zone; that persons not connected with the Allied administration would, when entering or leaving the Soviet zone, have to be in possession of passes issued "in accordance with previously established procedure": that goods belonging to the U.S., British, and French military authorities and intended for the Western zones would be allowed through specified "check points" only with the authorisation of the Soviet authorities in Berlin; that all property, exclusive of personal property, would be examined at these "check points; and that the new regulations would be applicable to traffic both entering and leaving Berlin, whether by road or rail. The U.S., British, and French authorities, in a reply the mime evening, protested against the new regulations as a unilateral violation of established procedure; Major-Gen. Brownjohn, the British deputy military governor, repudiated any Russian right to enter British military trains between Berlin and the British zone or to decide what goods should or should not leave the city, suggesting a suspension of the regulations for 15 days to permit further discussion, For several days prior to the announcement of the new traffic regulations, the Soviet-controlled press of the Eastern zone had launched a violent campaign against the Western Powers suggesting that a mass, movement of "starving Germans" could be expected from Western Germany into the Soviet zone.

In consequence of the new Soviet regulations, all Allied rail traffic between Berlin and Western Germany was cancelled on April 1 by the U.S. and British authorities and replaced temporarily by special air services for passengers and freight, using the Gatow and Tempelhof airfields (by quadripartite agreement the American, British, and French authorities share an international 10-mile-wide air "corridor" between Helmstedt, on the Anglo-Soviet zonal frontier, and Berlin). The previous night the Russian authorities had established "cheek points" at various places on the Helmstedt-Marienborn-Berim *Autobahn* (see accompanying map), and at Marienborn, on the Soviet side of the zonal

border, had held up 2 American and 1 British military train after Russian officials had been refused permission to board the trains to inspect passengers identification papers. The U.S. trains, bound from Frankfurt and Bremerhaven for Berlin, returned to Helmstedt, on the British side of the border, whilst the British train, proceeding from Berlin to Hanover, returned to Berlin after being held up all night in the Marienborn sidings. In Berlin itself the Russians also instituted "check points" on roads leading into the U.S., British, and French sectors, traffic being stopped and papers examined.

The situation remained unchanged the following day, when the French authorities fell into line with the Americans and British and likewise cancelled all trains between the French zone and Berlin. Food trains, however, continued to reach Berlin from Western Germany without interference by the Soviet authorities, whilst U.S. and British Dakotas, also without interference, continued to fly quantities of foodstuffs to Gatow and Tempelhof for the British and American sectors of Berlin. Conferences took place in the latter city between Generals Glay and Robertson, whilst after a 10-hour meeting of the *Kommandatura* the Soviet representative, Colonel Yelisarov, announced that the "check points" between the Soviet sector of Berlin and the other Allied sectors would be abolished; he intimated, however, that Russia would no longer be represented on 7 of the 19 committees of the *Kommandatura* owing to "shortage of staff," and asked that these should be absorbed into the remaining committees.

American troops in Berlin took their first retaliatory action on April 3 when they threw a cordon round the headquarters of the railway system for the Soviet zone (which is in the U.S. sector) and refused to allow any Russians to enter the building. In addition, U.S. troops established a "check point" on the main road between Berlin and Potsdam, where Marshal Sokolovsky, the Soviet Military Governor, has his residence, causing Russian officials to make a long detour. "When the Soviet authorities protested to General Clay, the latter replied that he could take no note of the protest until the " free entry of American trains into Berlin "had been solved. Major-Gen. Brownjohn, the British Deputy Governor, in a comment on the situation, said he believed the Russian traffic control measures were "an attempt to make the position of the Western Allies in Berlin untenable," and was "one of a number of moves to demonstrate to the German population that the Russians have power over us." After declaring that "it is our intention to show that we are not going to be bullied," he deprecated, however, any attempt to sensationalise the situation in Berlin, saying that "we are not about to engage in a pitched battle "and that Berlin should not be regarded as a "besieged garrison."

A certain abatement of the tension occurred on April 4, when the U.S. cordon round the railway building in Berlin was withdrawn after Soviet guards had evacuated the premises, contacts between the U.S. and Soviet officers and officials being of an amicable nature. Furthermore, it was reported from Berlin that special British bus services between the city and Helmstedt were running normally, that road traffic was not seriously affected by the Russian traffic control measures, and that travelers on the *Autobahn* were encountering no delay provided their papers were in order. From Frankfurt-am-Main it was announced that the U.S. special air services to Berlin were being suspended since freight trains were getting through to the city without trouble.

Correspondence was released on this date between Brigadier-Gen. Gailey (U.S. Army) and Major-Gen. Brownjohn, on the one hand, and Lt.-Gen. Dratvin (Soviet Deputy Military Governor) on the other relative to the situation arising out of the Soviet control measures. To Lt.-Gen. Dratvin's formal notification of these measures, Brig.-Gen. Gailey protested at the fact that they had been imposed "at 24 bourn notice" and, while recognising the right of the Soviet Military Government to check the identification papers of road travellers between Berlin and the tonal-frontiers, denied that ouch right existed in the case of passengers oil military trains, emphasising that Soviet officials would not be allowed on boa such trains. Lt.-Gen. Dratvin, in reply, alleged that lack of traffic control had been used by "shady individuals" for "all kinds of illegal operations and speculations, as well as by criminal and other lawless elements," and that this had led to "lawlessness and the commission of crimes "in the Soviet zone, which imposed on the Soviet authorities the duty to maintain, peace and order in the territory for which there were responsible. After declaring that the traffic regulations and "an internal matter concerning the Soviet authorities," he maintained that they need create no difficulties, nor hinder the movement of official trains or personnel provided with the necessary transit documents, and expressed confidence that the implementation of the regulations would "strengthen the relations between the zones of occupation as well as between the Military Government." To this communication Brig.-Gen. Gailey replied that the U.S. authorities were prepared to provide the Soviet authorities with appropriate documentation in respect of all military trains, whether carrying passengers or freight, passing through the Soviet zone to Berlin, but would in no circumstances agree to Soviet officials boarding such trains. He maintained that at a meeting in Berlin on June 29, 1945, between Marshal Zhukov and British and American officials. it had been "clearly understood that the U.S. forces in Berlin would have free and unrestricted use of the established corridors," and that it was only on this understanding that the American troops had with-drawn at the time from such areas as Saxony and Thuringia, subsequently incorporated in the Soviet zone. He added that the U.S. Military Government was "not aware of any use made by shady individuals "on its military trains and would not permit its train" to be used for such purposes. The correspondence between Lt.-Gen. Dratvin and Major-Gen. Brownjohn was on similar lines.

A serious incident occurred on April 5 when a Viking passenger aircraft of British European Airways, on the regular air service from London to Berlin, crashed in the Soviet sector of Berlin, after colliding with a Russian lighter plane, the disaster occurring while the BEA machine was preparing to land at Gatow airport (in the British sector). All 14 persons on board the Viking were killed (8 British and 2 American passengers, and the crew of 4), whilst the Soviet fighter crashed in the British zone, its pilot also being killed. Eye-witness reports said that the Soviet plane dived out of the clouds, flew under the Viking, and in turning struck the latter's wing, both machines crashing.

General Robertson, the British C.-in-C., lodged a personal protest with Marshal Sokolovsky, and announced that in future all British planes flying over the Soviet zone would be provided with fighter protection. A Foreign Office statement in London said that a "serious view" was taken of the Berlin plane crash and that Mr. Bevin was in touch with General Robertson and would make in statement to the House of Commons. The

Soviet Military Government also issued a statement expressing "deep regret" at the "unfortunate collision."

It was announced from Berlin on April 7 that General Robertson had presented to Marshal Sokolovsky two Notes containing (a) a request for written confirmation of a verbal assurance from the Soviet to the British. C-in-C. that "there was and is no intention to interfere with British aircraft" in the air "corridor" from the zonal frontier to Berlin," and. (b) a list of specific proposals concerning the nature and composition of an inquiry to be held into the disaster. Whilst Marshal Sokolovsky's reply was not published, the Soviet *Tass* Agency issued a *communiqué* to the effect that a Soviet inquiry commission had investigated the disaster and, after emphasising that the Soviet fighter was on a "training flight," declared (a) that the cause of the collision was "the sudden shooting out of the cloud ceiling by the British plane, and its failure to observe flying regulations," (b) that the British airfield at Gatow had not informed the Berlin air safety centre of the approach of the British plane (which, it was alleged; was half-a-mile from the Russian airfield at the time of the disaster and at a height of 1,300–2,000 ft.), "with the result that the safety centre could not inform the Russian authorities," and (c) that a Joint Anglo Russian inquiry was necessary to clear up finally some questions of detail." A statement from British H.Q. in Berlin said, that "the official British view is that the true facts about the collision cannot be established until the inquiry has been completed," and added: "The Viking had down from Hamburg down the corridor towards Berlin at a height of 1,500 ft, with the clouds another 1,500 ft. above it. These facts in themselves show that the Soviet story is palpably untrue.

The statement promised by Air. Bevin was made to the House of Commons on April 6.

With reference to the air disaster, he said that General Robertson had no wish to prejudge the cause of the catastrophe until an inquiry had been held, and that he (Mr. Bevin) had "no information to suggest that the conduct of the Soviet aircraft was in any way the result of direct instructions from the Soviet authorities," He then dealt with the wider events in Berlin including the departure from the Allied Control Councils of the Soviet representatives on March 20, and, with reference to the Soviet demand for information regarding the London Conference on Germany, said. "Our representatives in Berlin were not aware that this demand was going to be made, and declined to present a report. Accordingly the Soviet representative Walked out. As no decisions were reached at this consultative conference, there was no report to make. Therefore, meetings of the Control Council mid its subordinate committees and directorates are at present in abeyance. The British representatives, in consultation with their U.S. and French colleagues, are doing their best to negotiate with the Soviet authorities for a resumption of the normal activities of all the 4-Power bodies."

Turning to the new Soviet travel regulations, Mr. Bevin emphasised that these had been introduced at 21 hours notice, and went on.

No opportunity was given for consultation or discussion, notwithstanding the fact that there is clear 4-Power agreement for the occupation of Berlin, of the validity of which

there can be no doubt. It should be explained, however, that the regulations for travel to and from Berlin are not so clearly specified. "When the arrangements were made a good deal was taken on trust between the Allies, and until this event travel has been reasonably satisfactory. On the roads, British travellers have shown their documents. On military trains this has not been required since the trains were supplied by and were under the exclusive control of the British military authorities. The now difficulty results from the Soviet demand that Soviet military personnel should board the trains and examine the passengers' documents. This whole question of travel is now under discussion between the Soviet authorities on the one hand and the British, American, and French on the other. H.M. Government would welcome an agreement. In view of the arrangements for the occupation of Berlin, we cannot yield our right to free access to and from these sectors of occupation which is essential to maintain our force and fulfil our obligations as an occupying Power. I do not want to exaggerate the issues or say anything which would aggravate an already difficult situation. I regret what has happened, but if there is good will the difficulties are capable of solution."

Field-Marshal Montgomery, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, visited Berlin on April 6 on a visit which had been arranged before the recent disputes with the Russian authorities. After inspecting British troops, he had conversations with Generals Robertson, Clay, and Koenig, and in the evening dined at General Robertson's house with Marshal Sokolovsky (whom Field-Marshal Montgomery described as "a very old friend") and Lt.-Gen. Dratvin. The C.I.G.S. returned to London the following day.—(Times - Manchester Guardian - New York Times - New York Herald Tribune - Soviet Weekly - Le Monde, Paris) (**Prev. rep. Allied Control Council, 9057 A; London Conference, 9167 A.**)