

Page Two
Letter to President Reagan
Sept. 26, 1983

helped to rebuild, Naziism might never have been a significant movement. The success of the Marshall Plan, and MacArthur's administration of Japan, show how enlightened policies in regard to a defeated enemy can encourage democratic institutions.

While both sides in the "cold war" seem to have learned from Munich that aggressors shouldn't be appeased, neither seems to realize that this truth is insufficient to insure peace. They don't yet fully understand that deterrence is inherently unstable and leads toward war. Once the Nazis had gained power, and had embarked on an arms race, I doubt that any policy other than massive nonviolent resistance could have stopped them without resulting in war.

Nonviolent resistance obviously involves regarding one's "opponent" as less than diabolical. In this regard, how one reacts to events such as the Korean airliner tragedy is important. Objectivity and fairness are essential. A legal principle that's a critical part of the American democratic tradition is that people are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Many Americans seem to have forgotten this principle in their acceptance of the worst possible interpretation of Russian actions in regard to the jetliner. They state flatly that the Russians are murderers, that they deliberately shot down what they knew to be a civilian airliner.

On the basis of existing facts, I doubt that any impartial court would convict the Russians of first degree murder. In the dead of night, the Korean plane departed from its regular course, and flew into Soviet air-space, and over or near a number of the most sensitive Soviet military bases. The Soviet Union claims that during a period of 2½ hours, several of their fighters tried to contact the 747 and discover its identity. Fighter pilots have stated that they tried to contact the 747 by radio, by waggling their wings and blinking their lights at it, and even by firing tracer shells along its line of flight. The State Department has reported that radio transcripts support this claim of firing cannon shots. A former U.S. government official living in Connecticut, who was on another plane that entered Soviet air-space, reported that the fighters that accosted it did signal it to land by waggling their wings and flashing their lights. The only eyewitnesses to how the Korean jetliner was signalled are the Soviet fighter pilots. Any other version of what occurred is based on circumstantial evidence.

Although the 747 may have looked like a civilian jetliner, as far as we know, it didn't behave like one. The Russians could expect a jetliner to acknowledge the fighter signals and land. They could expect a spy plane to ignore the signals. A spy plane could be made to look like a jetliner. It couldn't be made to behave like one.

Available facts indicate that the character of the 747 could at least have been ambiguous from the Soviet point of view. Therefore, they can't be convicted of deliberately shooting down what they knew to be a civilian jetliner. They certainly didn't act humanely, and with full understanding of the political consequences of their action.

There are scenarios regarding the jetliner's flight that account for all of the known facts, and absolve the Soviets from deliberately murdering civilians, and the U.S. from spying. On your request, I'd be happy to send you two. None of us is always free from anger, but the interests of the American and Soviet

[For page three, go the back of the August 27 letter]