

ASTRONAUT

L.T.-OLDS. TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1963

(Richard C. Hottelet, substituting;
L.T. on New Guinea trip.)

I suppose that the reaction of most people to the cancellation of today's space flight - would go something like this. First, an exasperated query about - why the tracking station at Bermuda wasn't ready. Second, the question - what's so important about that particular tracking station?

Let's take a look at the answers - from the Space Agency. At Bermuda - the radar system started to malfunction this morning. The rest of the preparations for the space flight continued in the hope that word might come from the British island - that the radar ^{COMPUTER} was ready again. But - that word never came. The technical problem wasn't cleared up - in time to let the rocket blast off at Cape Canaveral.

As for the second question, an American space flight never gets the go-ahead signal - until every last detail checks out. And a tracking station is

more than a mere detail - even when it's on the opposite side of the world from the landing area.

The phrase "tracking station" - means exactly that. Each one is part of a communication system - extending around the world. Each one picks up the space cabin - as it flashes above the horizon, and zooms overhead. The failure of a single tracking station - would mean a break in communication. A period when the astronaut - might be "lost" in the sky. Something that is ruled out absolutely - no matter how many postponements it involves.

There you have the reason for - today's postponement. The leap of L. Gordon Cooper - into space - put off until tomorrow, at the earliest. Disappointing - but understandable.

IRAQ

The reports of fighting in northern Iraq - indicate that the demand for a Kurdish state has been rejected in Bagdad. When the present Iraqi regime took over after the assassination of Premier Kassem - Kurdish envoys arrived to negotiate for Kurdish autonomy. They said at the time - that the military junta agreed to a policy of decentralization for Iraq.

Since then - silence. But travelers reaching Beirut from Bagdad - tell of severe fighting near the oil center of Kirkuk. So severe that the Iraqi government has sent warplanes - to bomb and strafe the insurgents.

This outbreak in Iraq, incidentally - is a threat to Gamal Abdel Nasser. Iraq is part of Nasser's United Arab Republic - which would be hard hit by an Iraqi civil war.

CZECHS

Maybe Nikita Khrushchev can get some consolation - from the following. The distaste of African students for the Communist bloc - is susceptible to a Marxist interpretation. We in the West tend to think of the antagonism - as racial. But it may be more a matter of - economics.

Take that affair - in Prague. A gang of Czechs - beating a couple of African students. And slashing the tires of a car - belonging to an African diplomat.

Motive? The Czechs resent the higher standard of living - accorded to the students. The Red bosses, trying to lure the students into Communism - with money and consumer goods. The Czech people, angry - because they don't have enough of either. Taking their economic frustrations out on - the Africans.

Wouldn't you call that a Marxist interpretation - of Khrushchev's problem?

BIRMINGHAM

The cautious optimism with regard to Birmingham, Alabama - comes from Birmingham itself. And - from Washington.

The tension in the city - relaxed a bit further today. Federal observers, reporting - no signs of another race riot building up. The moderate elements on both sides - evidently keeping the hotheads under control.

In Washington, President Kennedy is said to feel that, as of now - Birmingham appears to be solving its own crisis. The President, hoping he won't have to provide Federal assistance - in the form of troops. The Commander-in-Chief still has Army detachments on the alert - in Alabama. But he won't order them into Birmingham - if he can possibly avoid doing so.

HAITI

The situation in Haiti is so confused tonight - that observers agree on just one thing. A showdown - is imminent. Either President Duvalier - will topple from power. Or - he'll entrench himself more securely as the strongman of Haiti.

The betting tonight - is on the former possibility. Almost everyone, expecting - the fall of Duvalier. In fact, Duvalier is described as hanging on in Port-au-Prince - until he salvages what he can in the way of money and personal belongings. Then, off to exile-in a plane that is standing by.

Much of this remains in the realm of speculation - because newsmen can't file their stories from Haiti. Duvalier has slapped a tight censorship - on Port-au-Prince.

X-15

One flight that did get off today - was the X-15. And you can bet that Pilot Bob Rushworth was happy about it - because he'd been through two postponements.

Today's flight over the Mojave Desert - was perfect. The Air Force Major, zooming up almost twenty miles - at five times the speed of sound. Then putting his rocket plane through the sharpest turn ever - a full ninety degrees. All this, with the external temperature of the X-15 - at nine hundred degrees fahrenheit.

The purpose of today's flight, to see how stress and heat combine - at that altitude and that velocity. More data - on conditions near the edge of outer space. Brought back by six hundred sensors - attached to the X-15.

COOPER

Today's experience makes Cooper - the second most frustrated of our astronauts. He's just behind Gus Grissom, who got within ten minutes of blast-off - before his rocket ride was scrubbed. Cooper reached twelve minutes - to zero. Third in line, our first man in space - John Glenn, who came within thirteen minutes of "A-Okay."

Astronaut Cooper spent almost six hours in his space capsule - before he learned that he wouldn't get off today. His comment on emerging - was appropriate. "A very realistic simulation" - said L. Gordon Cooper.

BRITAIN

Well, you could say that Britain has had a bit of revenge for the Battle of New Orleans -- or you could say that international procedures have been preserved. In any case, Britain has won the battle of the airline fares -- the United States surrendering when Secretary of State Dean Rusk asked the Civil Aeronautics Board to go along with the increased fares. It will now cost about twenty-seven dollars additional, round trip between New York and London -- but Britain will now at least let Pan Am and TWA land at Heathrow.

RAILROADS

The time clock for America's railroads began ticking today - with the submission of a special report to the President. When Mr. Kennedy set up his emergency board last month - he barred a strike for thirty days after the report was in. Now, the report is in - and the first day is just about gone. Which means that management and labor have twenty-nine days - to avert a nation-wide strike.

The issue, as you probably know - is featherbedding. That vexed question - of superfluous jobs. At any rate, management calls them - superfluous. And has the backing of the Supreme Court - to do something about it.

The first proposal of the Presidential board - is that both sides get down to some serious bargaining. And - right away.

SAILORS

I wonder if this dispatch from Sydney, Australia - makes the U. S. Navy sound a bit unchivalrous.

Yesterday we heard that almost three hundred men from the aircraft carrier "Coral Sea" - had jumped ship in Sydney to marry Australian girls.

Well, the captain of the ship - says it isn't so. The actual number - precisely two. How about - the earlier report? Apparently a lot of the crew - came sprinting up the gangplank at the last moment. And - were reported A.W.O.L. by mistake.

Rather unchivalrous - would you say? The vociferous denial that the gals Down Under - caused three hundred American sailors to give up the ship.

When the members of the British House of Commons rise as one man to cheer and applaud - you can be sure of the occasion. Another visit - from Sir Winston Churchill. The old warhorse, returning to the chamber - where he personally made so much of the history of the Twentieth Century.

Each time, some M.P. is sure to say sympathetically - "It's the last we'll see of the old boy." Each time - the prediction turns out to be premature. As it did today - with Sir Winston's arrival at the Houses of Parliament. He stayed half-an-hour, applauded Tory speakers - and received another ovation as he left.

One of the memorable scenes of our time - Winston Churchill in the House of Commons.