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Black Box: KAL 007 and the Superpowers

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fragmentation of centralized control which naturally ensued is best exemplified by an incident which was to have vital repercussions. On 24 August 1963, the State Department released a message to the embassy in Saigon acknowledging Diem's expendability if his volatile brother Nhu could not be edged out of the political picture. The message, of obvious import in the Administration's overall position in Vietnam, was released without the knowledge of the Secretary of Defense or the Director of Central Intelligence.

Thomas D. Boettcher's book is nominally a first-rate textbook-style history of Vietnam from the beginning of French colonialism until April 1975, but it is at its best in examining the often tumultuous relationship which existed between the soldiers and the statesmen as early as the 1954 Dien Bien Phu crisis, when "General Ridgway's frank appraisal of the problems . . . in Viet Nam turned Eisenhower away from a troop commitment" against the advice of Secretary Dulles, who was preparing to signal France "that the U.S. was willing to move on the matter." In an even more telling passage, Mr. Boettcher describes Robert McNamara as one "who . . . looked upon the generals as men who had stayed in uniform after the Second World War because they couldn't make it in the civilian world."

This book goes far beyond personalities, though. It is first and foremost an exhaustive historical work which stands among the very best available.

Mr. Boettcher has gone one step

further than standard pieces by giving us essentially a second book, printed in the margins of the main text, in which he provides the reader with what is best described as Vietnam trivia— anecdotes, quotations, photographs (over 500, superbly captioned), even an excerpt from the Soldier's Field Manual explaining the construction of Vietcong booby traps. This "book within a book" allows for a far broader understanding of the subject than that which is possible from a conventional history.

Mr. Boettcher's work should serve as the heart of any personal library of Vietnam literature. It is exceptionally well-documented and he uses personal interviews as effectively as Mr. Rust. While Mr. Rust's study is sometimes a little trite for serious history, "Max Taylor was Kennedy's kind of general," it is nevertheless an excellent account of a subject long overdue for dedicated independent analysis. Together with Mr. Boettcher's book, it is an attempt to interpret a crucial period in history which serves its purpose quite well.

LAWRENCE T. DIRITA
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Dallin, Alexander. *Black Box: KAL 007 and the Superpowers*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 180pp. \$14.95

Armed with a fellowship from the W. Averell Harriman Institute, Columbia University, the author examined the various theories about what happened and what caused the Korean Airlines Flight #007 to end up

in Soviet Air Space. Interviews were conducted in Moscow, Washington and in Montreal, home of the International Civil Aviation Organization. The author talked with knowledgeable people and has answered many of the theories that have been posed about the incident.

While a variety of explanations have emerged from the events surrounding the flight and its path to destruction, there are basically four that are examined. The first is the notion that it was caused by some equipment failure or an in-flight hijacking. The next is it all came about because there was human error, an undetected mistake, incapacitation or undetected cause during the flight. The third surmise is that the aircraft's crew (Captain, Co-Pilot and Flight Engineer) wanted to save time/fuel and therefore were taking a shortcut through Soviet airspace. Lastly, the author examines the idea that the crew was on some surreptitious mission for some foreign intelligence agency. Dallin examines all of them and compares the facts against the theories or hypotheses offered. None of these theories hold up well when fitted to the known facts. The reader is left with either believing that the necessary documents are locked in some security safe somewhere or there were some vital verbal exchanges on the flight deck that only the in-flight recorder will ever reveal, and that rests somewhere on the chilly bottom of the waters off Sakhalin Island. In any event, the facts do not fit any of the theories put forward so far.

Dallin devotes the remaining half of *Black Box* to examining the behavior of the two superpowers. He examines their actions and reduces them down to a handful of goals. The United States appears to have been concerned with labeling the Soviets as being totally devoid of morals and with any constraints of law. Dallin believes that data pictures an Administration that used the incident to generate support for itself and also for its defense programs. Lastly, the United States used the incident to initiate steps to reduce the likelihood of possible future recurrences. The Soviets, on the other hand, appear more concerned about what the controlling elite of the regime would think about the incident, pursuing a program of what Dallin labels "damage limitation." The attempt to limit the damage extends to the international community as well. They also attempted to undermine any U.S. allegation and also began to take those steps that would assure that a similar event, the penetration of their airspace, would not occur again.

The actual question of who destroyed the aircraft is clear. Also, the data shows that the Soviets knew what they were doing. An aircraft had entered their airspace and whether it was civilian or not was irrelevant. The reaction would be the same if it were military—bring it down one way or another. As Dallin states: "it is better to be safe (shoot it down), than to be sorry (let it leave the air space)."

The style is easy to read. The technical matters are reduced down

for the layman without being insulting. Anyone interested in how the powers handle incidents will find Dallin's work of great use. *Black Box* is excellent reading about a very tragic event.

PETER C. UNSINGER
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Fisher, David. *Morality and the Bomb: An Ethical Assessment of Nuclear Deterrence*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. 136pp. \$25

The author of this short work is described on the book's jacket as a "civil servant with the Ministry of Defense." From the evidence of the book itself, it is clear that he is also a person trained in the techniques of contemporary British philosophy and that he is a Christian with a strong concern both for ethical values and for clarity of thought on a difficult subject. His book, because of its sober style and undramatic conclusions, will not generate great excitement, and it may be neglected because the author is not prominent in the American debate on these matters. But that would be unfortunate because this is probably the best work on the most important moral dilemma of our time.

Fisher's book is particularly valuable for the way in which it addressed a major lacuna in the U.S. Catholic bishops' letter on war and peace, namely, the letter's failure to give a satisfactory account of how the Western reliance on nuclear deterrence is to be justified. He begins by laying out the basic structure of

mutual deterrence and explaining why it is unlikely to fail. Like the American bishops and the ultimately rejected report of the Church of England working party, *The Church and the Bomb*, (1982), Fisher works within the just war tradition of thinking about justification for the use of force. With regard to the two fundamental norms of *jus in bello*, he affirms the principle of proportion and applies it to policy issues in a standard way without exploring its deeper difficulties. He also upholds the principle of noncombatant immunity, but he does allow exceptions to it on the basis of what he calls "principled consequentialism." On the basis of these principles he holds that there is "a strong moral presumption . . . against any use of nuclear weapons." On the other hand, he scrutinizes the alternatives to deterrence and finds them less satisfactory and more risky. Then, in an important and subtle chapter in which he pays careful attention to the ethical dilemmas confronting both political leaders and military commanders, he argues that the moral justification of deterrence is impossible "if one believes that any use of nuclear weapons would be morally impermissible." But, in Fisher's view, "it is not possible to establish in advance that there are no conceivable circumstances in which use, in some form, might be morally licit." Since deterrence does not depend for its effectiveness on the risk of unlimited escalation, which would violate the principle of proportionality, it can be justified as a means of preventing