

An abridged version of the following review appeared in 'The American Spectator', October 1985, pp 36-39. The second review is from 'National Review' magazine, March 27, 1987.

Sense, Nonsense, and Pretense on the Korean Airliner Atrocity -- A Reader's Guide to the Literature, by James E. Oberg // date: July 31, 1985

"Reassessing the Sakhalin incident", P. Q. Mann (pseudonym).  
Defence Attache, No. 3. (May-June) 1984, pp 41-56.

"K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It", David Pearson.  
The Nation, Aug 18-25, 1984, pp 105-124.

"Sakhalin Sense and Nonsense", J. E. Oberg,  
Defence Attache, No. 1 (Jan-Feb) 1985. pp 37-47.

KAL FLIGHT 007: The Hidden Story, by Oliver Clubb,  
Permanent Press, Sag Harbor, New York, April 1965, 174 pages, \$16.95.

Black Box: KAL 007 and the Superpowers. by Alexander Dallin.  
University of California Press, Berkeley. California. 1985, 130 pages, \$14.95.

Day of the Cobra The True Story of KAL Flight 007, by Jeffrey St. John,  
Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1984, 254 pages, \$11.95.

Massacre 747: The Story of Korean Airlines Flight 007, by Richard Rohmer,  
Paperjacks Ltd., Markham, Ontario. May 1964, 213 pages paperback, \$3.95.

The Curious Flight, of KAL 007, by Conn Hallinan,  
U. S. Peace Council, New York, NY, 1984, 6 pages.

The President's Crime: The Provocation with the South Korean Airliner Carried Out by Order of Reagan, by "Akio Takahashi", Novosti Publishers, Moscow, 1984, 126 pages, 30 kopecks.

"KE007 -- A Conspiracy of Circumstance", Murray Sayle,  
The New York Review of Books, April 25, 1965, pages 44-54.

When 269 people die horribly and world tension is noticeably heightened, it is a prudent policy to determine just how it happened and how it can be prevented from happening again. In the case of the "Korean Air liner Massacre" of August 31, 1983, two years of post mortems have sadly been without productive result: the appropriate parties do not seem to have learned proper lessons, and the stage remains set for repetitions of the tragedy.

My own extensive investigation of many aspects of the Soviet shooting down of Korean Air-lines Anchorage to Seoul flight KE007 has led to some fairly confident conclusions both about what happened and about how the Soviets reacted afterwards.

First, the most likely (actually, the "least unlikely") cause of the aircraft's course deviation was innocent flight crew error compounded by insufficiently vigorous verification efforts by these same people (they had chances to discover they were off course, but they apparently never took advantage of them). Secondly, there was nothing in the actual flight path that would reasonably have led any agencies of the US government to realize a civilian aircraft was off course and potentially in danger (in hindsight there should have been additional procedures and equipment capable of such detection, and they are now in operation). Third, the Soviet air defense forces acted with incompetence and callousness and attacked the aircraft not

when it had failed to respond (no requisite contact procedures seem to have been executed properly) but as it neared international airspace and "escape". Finally, the Soviets should have been able to determine the "target" was a civilian airliner, but apparently didn't -- and arguably wouldn't have cared anyway.

That's how I see the facts of the case. But following the shootdown and the deaths of 269 innocent people, Moscow reacted with all the veracity and moral integrity one might expect from a five year old child. First the disclaimers: "I didn't do it! ", followed by the counter-accusation "Why didn't you stop me?" and the blame-transfer attempt, "You made me do it!" In the weeks that followed, the latter two arguments were embellished and elaborated by Soviet spokesmen who declared it "an established fact" that the aircraft was on a deliberate spy mission and that all Soviet behavior was not only legal but moral as well -- which left full responsibility for the horror of the deaths on the alleged instigators, the Americans.

The Soviet push to convince people of these ridiculous excuses for murder received a double shot of support in mid-1964 with the appearance of two magazine articles, one in London and one in New York. The first appeared under the pseudonym "P. Q. Mann", and the second was by David Pearson, before then an obscure graduate student in sociology at Yale.

"Mann" argued that he had discovered coordination of the airliner's flight plan with both an American spy satellite and a space shuttle mission. To enhance the credibility of such a scenario, he described an analogous coordination twenty years earlier, again between an American "ferret" (electronics eavesdropping) satellite and not one but two border crossings into East Germany. The author criticized air traffic controllers for not warning KE007, and also alleged that the news media had not investigated the plausibility of such spy scenarios thoroughly enough

The use and abuse of pseudonyms has often been a clever tool for deception. The "P. Q. Mann" case is an outstanding example. When his article appeared in London's Defence Attache in mid-1984, the mystery surrounding his true identity added spice -- and authority -- to his "spy flight" charges. Wrote The Economist, "Whoever he is, he appears to have access to high level intelligence data". Other spy-flight buffs whispered that he was a highly placed British intelligence analyst with an excess of scruples.

As it turned out, he was nothing of the sort -- although his interests were well served by such confusion and speculation. According to London newspapers his true name was Tony Devereux, a public relations executive for a London advertising firm. He had no spaceflight or intelligence operations experience, as a careful reading of his article clearly showed. The secrecy was not to protect himself (he was in no danger of violation of any "official secrets" act) but to conceal his lack of qualifications to pose as an "expert". And it worked: when Devereux's identity was exposed, and when Defence Attache had to repudiate his charges and pay a substantial libel settlement to Korean Airlines, such "news" went nowhere near as far as the original accusations. There is no evidence that The Economist for example, ever bothered to set the record straight and un-misinform its readers; certainly major broadcast news agencies worldwide never did.

Real experts immediately recognized the "Mann" theories as garbage. His alleged precursor plane/satellite coordination in 1964 rested on a false identification of a military weather satellite as a ferret satellite, which it wasn't. And his suggestions that in 1983 the space shuttle was passing close enough to the airliner to direct the operation founder on the simple physical fact that the two vehicles were over the horizon from each other, out of direct line-of-sight radio contact.

The full and devastating factual rebuttal of Devereux's crackpottery appeared in the Jan-Feb 1985 issue of the same magazine, Defence Attache. I wrote it so I won't comment on it except to say that specialists have summarized that I "blew him out of the water". For some odd reason, not a single major news media -- even those which had highlighted Devereux's original nonsensical material -- even mentioned the existence of this refuting article. The article is unavailable in the United States; for example, World Press Review, which reprinted the Devereux material originally with great respect and enthusiasm, apparently has decided to stonewall their faulty editorial judgment and has not even mentioned the existence of the refutation.

Instead, great public attention is paid to theorists such as David Pearson, a sociology graduate student at Yale, whose long, turgid argumentation in last summer's The Nation still echoes and re-echoes through the media. Pearson conjures up support for the theory that the US

knew of the plane's deviation. Consequently, its subsequent failure to alert the aircraft was claimed to be evidence for complicity in either a pre-arranged plot or at the very least grounds for significant responsibility for the plane's ultimate terrible fate.

To appear to prove this, Pearson delivers an avalanche of technical and military terminology which gives a good appearance of true expertise. But to specialists in radar, aircraft traffic control, and Soviet studies, Pearson's material appears outrageous. This is because Pearson repeatedly makes the most elementary technical errors in his evident eagerness to appear to prove his obviously pre-conceived case.

He relies on "flat earth physics" (in the words of Time science editor Frederic Golden) to "prove" that certain USAF radars (such as Cobra Dane on Shemya in the Aleutians) must have followed the aircraft's whole flight (physical laws, plus practical programming limitations, made this impossible). He relies on "assertions of the consequent" to establish that the nearby RC-135 was "certain" to detect and identify the airliner, without any list of such identification capabilities. He refers to a USAF/FAA agreement to warn off-course outbound airliners, even though that agreement had lapsed a year before the incident. Elsewhere he eagerly repeated (and has never retracted despite several opportunities I've offered him) absurdities about a space shuttle dummy payload (carried up just to test the spaceship's robot arm) being a "secret dipole antenna". In hopes of appearing persuasive he must count on -- and cultivate -- the ignorance of his readers.

Late this spring the major news media did pay some attention to the release of the two latest books on the shootdown. The book by a respected academic, Alexander Dallin, was generally treated kindly, while the shrill conspiracy advocacy of Oliver Clubb was almost universally panned.

Clubb subsequently complained that his reviewers had not been specific enough in their criticism. I am happy to have this opportunity to spell it out in detail. A few concrete examples can be given.

Since Clubb clearly wants to prove the deliberate nature of the airliner's course deviation, he needs to produce provable crew actions totally inconsistent with an innocent accident. One such item is an alleged turning off of the airliner's transponder while crossing the Kamchatka Peninsula -- an action supposedly taken with the conscious intent of avoiding the notice of Soviet interceptors.

On page 20, Clubb lays out what he intends to prove "There was further evidence that Flight 007's pilot had not simply strayed unwittingly over Kamchatka, but had overflowed it intentionally -- taking pains to conceal his aircraft's identity." Clubb quotes accurately [I checked the original] from the Miami Herald: "The pilot appears to have turned off the signal device that would have identified him as an innocent airliner. It's called an IFF system...." The evidence presented for this is that the Soviet pilot over Sakhalin reported no response to his IFF query, and that the Japanese military radars on Hokkaido picked up the blip but no coded identifying response. "Pilots worldwide, civilian and military, American and Soviet alike, use the same IFF system and compatible equipment", reported the Miami paper, as quoted by Clubb.

And there is the first problem: the basic assertion happens to be false. The Miami newsman confused a military IFF -- "Identify Friend or Foe" -- system with the civil aviation transponder system which responds to queries from commercial airports equipped with secondary surveillance radar. There is no such worldwide compatibility of IFF systems, as any truly expert aviation source could have told the Miami paper or Clubb. The Soviet pilot's IFF system would have received a response only from another Soviet aircraft. The Japanese military radar, not being the proper type of radar found at commercial airports, would never have triggered the airliner's response, while a commercial query would have (and did, in fact) receive a response which only told the observers it was an airliner, any nation's airliner. In any case, neither of the two reported facts support the allegation that the airliner's transponder was actually turned off: evidence is available which shows just the opposite.

Nevertheless, Clubb is able to claim -- however falsely -- that he has proof that "the airliner's IFF" (sic!) was off over Sakhalin. Now observe the careful metamorphosis of this claim in subsequent pages:

\_\_ On page 50-51 he writes, "We have already noted that Flight 007 evidently maintained radio silence as it flew across Kamchatka and also had its IFF system turned off." [But the "no-IFF" claim was over Sakhalin, not Kamchatka]

\_\_\_ On page 65, he writes: "Yet, as we have seen, there had indeed been aspects of Flight 007's behavior which raised troubling questions... [including] the fact [sic!] that its IFF had evidently been turned off." [So the "report" becomes a con-venient "fact"].

\_\_\_ On page 112, the distortion of the original (and inaccurate) Miami Herald claim results in the outrageous passage, "The requirements of an intelligence mission would also explain [the pilot's] `strange' behavior: ... the fact [sic!] that he had manifestly turned off his IFF, by which his aircraft could have been immediately identified when it intruded into Soviet airspace over Kamchatka [sic!]." But the cited original source claimed only Sakhalin!

This graphic example of a step-by-step modification of an originally inaccurate and irrelevant claim into a key piece of "supportive evidence" for the "spy scenario" is typical of Clubb's level of academic skill and intellectual honesty on this subject. And even though I had written him with precisely these criticisms in early June, more than a month later he was writing to the New York Review of Books to present exactly this "IFF-was-off" argument (which he clearly felt must have been one of his strongest) without any modification.

Could Clubb honestly have believed the Miami newspaper was accurate in its original mistaken confusion over transponders? If he did (and he never seems to have checked it out with any expert), then one might expect he would have had to accept other claims made elsewhere in the same article, claims NOT EXCERPTED in his book. A prime example is that the newspaper's report concluded:

"Almost without exception, American experts consider it illogical to think that the United States would use a commercial airliner on an ultra-sensitive spying mission. Even the most venturesome of U.S. theorists do not conclude that [the airliner] was spying. " And it's obvious why Clubb would not want to repeat THAT testimony! This deliberate selectivity is a sign of conscious deception, not careful scholarship.

Another example of omission of critical contrary evidence: Clubb wants to prove that US tracking systems followed the flight and failed to warn it. The RC-1355 is a handy culprit, if it can be shown that the aircraft had such a capability.

To show this, Clubb writes (page 43): "Tom Bernard and T. Edward Eskelson, both former Air Force communications specialists who had flown on RC-135 flights out of Okinawa, provided a detailed description of RC-135 capabilities. Among other things, they noted that even if the particular RC-135 in question had returned to its base there would have been another such aircraft off the Kamchatka coast to replace it, " So by page 79 Clubb is able to report, "So, too, have U.S. reconnaissance capabilities been strengthened... as we have seen, with RC-135s patrolling continuously off the Kamchatka Coast. " (On page 46 he again uses the 'fact' of "around-the-clock RC-135 patrolling off the Kamchatka coast" to prove another non sequitur). To prove this, Clubb must first deliberately obfuscate the question of different models of RC-135s, each with different missions and capabilities -- it is always "THE" capabilities of "THE RC-135" universally. Next, he must withhold from his reader the singularly crucial item about the relevance of the Bernard and Eskelson testimony, to wit, that it dealt with operations fifteen years earlier, supporting B-52 runs to and from Southeast Asia. Any reader so informed would quite naturally ask themselves if there might not have been any changes in the intervening years. To avoid such doubts, Clubb declines to bother his readers with inconvenient facts.

Clubb confuses "cause and effect", in part by scrambling chronological sequences of some events. For example, on page 38 he refers to Ogarkov's claims about the nearby RC-135: "The US acknowledgement that the RC-135 had flown 'close to' the airliner... corroborated the account given by Marshall Ogarkov at his news conference.... The fact that [an American official's] account so closely paralleled that of Marshall Ogarkov lends further support to the conclusion that those matching accounts were both essentially correct. " Actually, the Soviets made NO mention of any relationship with a nearby RC-135 until AFTER American officials had disclosed its presence: subsequently, the Soviets gleefully adopted and adapted the American account with no evidence they contributed anything original. Plagiarism is NOT corroboration, as any university professor should know.

Clubb trusts the good will of the Soviets sufficiently to make up evidence where needed. On page 65 he blasts the airliner for "its unresponsiveness to attempts doubtlessly made by the Soviets to contact it on an international emergency frequency." Why is he so sure those calls were "doubtlessly made"? Pure faith: "We have every reason to suppose that the Soviets would do what they said they did."

The earlier 1978 KAL-902 Murmansk-area over-flight treatment (page 93) shows the extent to which Clubb will twist available facts and inferences to whitewash Soviet behavior. "Russian ground stations attempted repeatedly, by Soviet account, to contact the intruding aircraft, presumably on an international emergency frequency; but they got no answer. The pilot subsequently claimed that his crew didn't hear anything -- even as KAL Flight 007, five years later, ostensibly wouldn't 'hear anything' as it overflew Kamchatka. Yet we have every reason to suppose that the Soviets, in the circumstances, would do what they said they did."

In fact we have plenty of reasons to believe the Korean pilot's account from 1978 and dismiss the Soviet (and Clubb's) account. First are the recordings made in Finland on the 121.5 MHz emergency channel, of the Koreans calling desperately for the Soviet jets to answer with no Soviet response. Second we have the matter of the cockpit voice recorders, which fell into Soviet hands, and were never returned: it should be reasonable to assume that had these voice recorders showed Soviet voice calls and Korean conversations about ignoring them, the tapes and transcripts would have been broadcast to the world. Since the tape contents were never revealed, I can think of no other explanation but that they did not confirm -- nay, they fully debunked the official Soviet version. Clubb ignores both the Finnish tapes and the mysterious absence of the airliner cockpit voice recorder tapes, and with good reason: they are fatal to his (and the Soviet) account.

Clubb also uses all of David Pearson's material from Nation, conveniently unverified. On page 110 he repeats the fallacy that "the giant phased-array radar at Shemya would have shown the airliner to be headed straight for the Kamchatka coast. But the Shemya base sounded no alarms. These several sins of commission and omission, necessary to facilitate the airliner's uninterrupted flight on its unauthorized course, could not ALL have been by accident. Beyond reasonable doubt, they had been by design." This is nonsense. The radar was incapable, by conscious design, of tracking aircraft.

Subsequent spyplane theories assign this role to a "Cobra Talon" radar "on Shemya Island" when that system used to be in Thailand to watch Chinese space shots! In desperation, Pearson and others have conjured up an entire phantom empire of OTH ("Over the Horizon") radars in the North Pacific, including on Shemya, even though the island itself isn't even geographically wide enough for the stretched out antenna arrays needed for such capabilities.

The most amazing mental gymnastics surround one of Clubb's (and of fellow conspiracy nuts) key theses, which is this: modern airliners simply cannot go off course accidentally, so if they go off course, it is with deliberate purpose (page 22: "What we have done is to establish the extreme improbability of a navigational failure of any sort") Real experts know that course deviations, while rare, can and do innocently occur from time to time. To support his thesis of non-innocency, Clubb must oppose this view.

The extent to which he will do so is illustrated by his treatment of the South Pacific Islands Airways incident of September 29, 1984. On pages 142-3 he nearly argues that this deviation, in which another airliner nearly intruded over Murmansk, was yet another American spy mission! "Could it have been purely coincidental that this unauthorized flight had 'strayed' off course in precisely the direction, out of all those in which it might have gone, which would have taken it over the same Soviet naval base KAL Flight 902 had 'strayed' over in April 1978? This pattern of events points to a sinister possibility...." Instead, the event points to the fallibility of human beings and to the selectivity that such errors will receive greatest attention when they occur in the most dangerous regions -- i.e., the USSR border.

Classic fallacies of reasoning abound, including the false dilemma: on page 24, he writes, "Unless we are to assume incompetence, do we not have to assume that the authorities in question [American and Japanese air traffic controllers] had unexplained reasons for not doing anything about the aircraft on their radar screens as it headed undeviatingly on its fatal course towards Russia's Sakhalin Island?" The third (and authentic) alternative is that these authorities had no sensors capable of providing such data -- the falsely conjured up "radar screens" reference is a trick. Yet on page 27, Clubb insists: "The assertion that the KAL airliner's deviant flight went undetected for two and a half hours by U. S. and Japanese ground control authorities rests on the idea that the sophisticated ground control system created to monitor flights along this extremely sensitive route was incapable, though it employed the most sophisticated equipment available, of doing what it was designed to do. This seems almost inconceivable on the face of it." Perhaps crackpots like Clubb cannot grasp this reality, but rational people can (Clubb must realize this, at

least intuitively, hence his studiously cultivated avoidance of rational argumentation): airliners in mid-flight were on their own, solely responsible for maintaining and reporting their positions, and air traffic control radars were never intended to provide help along these portions of the route.

Such consistent failures of fact and of logic are the reasons expert reviewers have been unconvinced by Clubb's book. For the far-left ideologist or the knee-jerk Soviet apologist the book provides sufficient incentive for believing in America's guilt, a belief already in place before the need for any facts or logic at all. But for anyone interested in reaching the truth, it is a dismal failure.

Alexander Dallin's book, "The Black Box", is somewhat better, but it looks far better than it actually is. First, the scholar plays by the rules and speaks on certain topics (such as international affairs) with pre-established reputation for expertise. His account of the way the event fit into the existing Soviet and American world views is excellent. For the Soviets, they had to present the event to satisfy "a domestic audience which needed to be impressed with the continued infallibility of the ruling party, the integrity of Soviet borders, the vigilance of its protectors, and the malice of their enemies abroad." Hence the Soviet, propaganda response could have been (and was) predicted within hours of the initial event.

But on areas foreign to his academic experience (such as aviation), Dallin relies too strongly on the power of pure deduction and on the persuasiveness of heavyweight jargon. His map of the aircraft's route shows a bizarre, unique jog due south over Sakhalin, utterly inconsistent with every other published account. He falls for the RC-135 fallacy and, like Clubb, neglects to inform his readers that the Eskelson material is fifteen years out of date. His treatment of other topics in these areas reveals him as out of his depth. And when he encounters genuine expertise, he often rejects it. For example, he unfairly characterizes the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) report as "a whitewash", without being able to list a single factual error.

Although he is not reluctant to criticize some sources as "nonsensical, "ludicrous", or "absurd", Dallin has been misinformed by Pearson's superficially authoritative claims of thorough US realtime knowledge of the course deviation. He makes no factual criticism of anything in Pearson's highly erroneous piece in *The Nation*, and elsewhere indicates he found it convincing. This is symptomatic of the central, fatal flaw of his book: a venturing outside an area of expertise with an overconfident trust in the mechanics of pure scholarship.

So it should come as no surprise that Dallin is unable to imagine any accidental way the airliner could go off course -- there is no reason to believe he is capable of such imagination. Consequently, he admits, seemingly under protest, that the deliberateness theory (and the US complicity corollary) are the ones growing stronger with the passage of time.

For the sake of the discussions of political repercussions, and for the outstanding list of citations and footnotes, this is a valuable book on the topic. But the author is not qualified to make any authoritative conclusions as to the technical cause(s) of the tragedy.

For all the press attention given to Clubb's and Dallin's books, with their varying degrees of pro-conspiracy sentiment, a reader might conclude that these were the first two books on the subject. Actually, they were not: books by authors Jeffrey St. John and Richard Rohmer appeared the year before. They received no national attention or wide reviews; not surprisingly, they also both had rejected the "American conspiracy" theories. Any cause-and-effect speculation is left to the reader.

Washington-based journalist Jeffrey St. John would obviously have liked to prove the Soviets guilty of deliberately luring the jet off course so as to assassinate Congressman Larry McDonald, the president of the John Birch Society. He provides several technically accurate scenarios of how it could have been done. But then St. John proves to be too principled a journalist to make a good propagandist: he also reports the disclosure of subsequent facts and investigations which disprove all of the scenarios.

The author's sympathies are obvious, since he was a personal friend of McDonald and he describes in detail many of their conversations. The book concentrates on the political environment of the event more than on the actual shootdown, since St. John, unlike Dallin, sticks to the topics he knows well and stays off thin intellectual ice. The result is a fine portrait of the human side of the tragedy, written by a reliable journalist who was intimately familiar with the scenes he paints. It rambles off center (usually far to the right) too often to make for smooth

reading, but the added material is not mere padding, it adds a sensation of horror at the human tragedy totally missing from the icy academic exercises of Dallin or the passionate political polemics of Clubb. Real people died horribly, St. John reminds us, and for this (and for nuggets of other details, such as that Geraldine Ferraro's long-time family doctor was among the dead) the book is highly recommended.

That McDonald was a "right-wing extremist" whose death was not mourned by the Washington political establishment is a cruel fact which St. John documents sadly. But if there is a "last laugh" it surely is with the side of the martyred congressman, whose murder vindicated his political beliefs so graphically. After all, of the hundreds of professional politicians in Washington, only a handful would ever have believed, before the fact, that the Soviets would shoot down an unarmed civilian airliner without warning. Most would have said only "right-wing extremists" could believe such a thing. McDonald did believe the Soviets capable of such an atrocity, and he was proven fatally accurate, a fact his surviving colleagues seem unable to posthumously forgive him for.

Richard Rohmer is a retired Canadian Major-General and the author of more than a dozen books. And his latest work shows it: it reads well, with the flavor of a man who knows what he's talking about or at least knows where to find the right experts to supplement his own knowledge. As such, the facts as he presents them are readable and reliable.

His conclusions have frequently been quoted by conspiracy nuts, especially his assertion that "They knew exactly where they were". But this is highly selective, since Rohmer's actual conclusions involve a damning indictment of Soviet brutality as well as a total exoneration of American behavior before, during, and after.

Rohmer's theory that the pilots were taking a fuel-saving shortcut is a reasonable hypothesis, and it is well argued (including with some unique insights into Korean Airlines finances and post-shutdown shakeups). But other specialists have raised seemingly fatal flaws which Rohmer has not adequately dealt with. Mainly, as the ICAO accident investigation report noted, if such shortcuts over Sakhalin were common practice the Japanese would have noticed them long ago and they hadn't. Also, the amount of the savings would have reached perhaps a thousand dollars for the airline, hardly justification for such a risk.

Nevertheless, the book is extremely valuable as an analysis of the flight aspects of the case. For example, Rohmer uses the Soviet air-to-ground transcripts of the final minutes of the event to demonstrate convincingly that, despite Soviet claims, the target airliner never made the famous "hump" course deviation. Instead, Rohmer proves it maintained a straight course throughout that phase of the encounter. Such careful analyses have understandably been ignored by conspiracy nuts, who wish to use Rohmer's expertise to support their point of view. It does not, as they know but don't want the public to know.

Besides these books, a number of pamphlets have appeared around the world. The Hallinan pamphlet serves as an example of what Moscow would like to convince the Western public of, since there is little dispute that the so-called "U.S. Peace Council" is a tool of the CPUSA, which itself serves purely the official and super-orthodox Moscow Line. Although some naive American peace groups may prefer the charade of believing the "Peace Council" consists of people who are sincere, honest citizens, competent observers fully recognize their slavish intellectual servitude to Soviet policy. Thus it should come as no surprise that Hallinan's pamphlet is chock full of misrepresentations and lies; what is rather more interesting is how little the factual material is distinguishable from that in the works of Pearson and Clubb.

Hallinan's piece (and Clubb's too) used such counterfeit gems as the "Volkman testimony" by writing: "Ernest Volkman, national science editor of Defense Science magazine, told the CBC that KAL regularly overflies the USSR in order to gather military intelligence." But Volkman holds no such position with that magazine and is in fact a staffer on Bob Guccione's Penthouse magazine (such credentials might have led listeners to a different evaluation of his credibility). Further, according to Volkman himself (and I seem to be the only researcher who took the trouble to chase down the original source of the quotation), he never said any such thing. "What I said," he told me in a letter dated July 2, 1985, "is that such an assertion has been reported. I have no independent corroborative evidence that the assertion is true." That's obviously quite a different assertion, in reality, than is portrayed by Hallinan, Clubb, and others.

Elsewhere, Hallinan asserts that experts "with close contacts in the US intelligence community" believe that the US Navy secretly recovered the airliner's flight recorders. I showed

copies of the pamphlet to these men; one kindly sent me a copy of a letter which contained the blistering protest of what he termed an outrageous falsification of his position. It seems Hallinan had never even talked to him about the claim.

Such are the hazards of "scrapbook scholarship". And such are the fatal weaknesses in the works of Hallinan, Clubb, and others.

Hallinan's pamphlet is not an isolated case of what seems to be Soviet-front groups floating planted information. In mid-1984 a book appeared in Japan under the authorship of one "Akio Takahashi", identified as a leading Japanese journalist. The book squarely adhered to the announced Soviet line, and was reprinted in a Russian edition with uncommon speed. Oddly, nobody in Japan seems ever to have heard of 'Takahashi' before, and all elements of his "author's biography" which were checkable turned out to be counterfeit. You can even reliably judge this book by its cover: the NOVOSTI edition showed a blacked-out aircraft in a murky sky, but the vehicle's nose, tail, and engine structure identify it unmistakably as an RC-135, not a Boeing-747. Further, some of the alleged spy satellite data presented in the book show unmistakable Russian fingerprints, because the identification codes transform "B" into not "2" (the second letter of our alphabet) but into "3" (it's the third letter of the cyrillic alphabet)!

Behind all these propaganda conflicts, there remains the actual puzzle over the plane's actions. If the behavior of American radar observers and of Soviet air defense forces can be reasonably well reconstructed, what about the original cause, the course deviation. Is there any reasonable way a plane could so grievously lose its way?

Japan-based Australian author Murray Sayle believes there is, and has spent months of full-time research investigating the case and attempting to explain what happened. The summary of his conclusions as published in *The New York Review of Books*, is superb, a crisp, rational, analytical treatment of the carefully defined problem and of the factors reflecting on a possible solution. Sayle claims to have found just such a solution, and it is a logical, internally consistent, intuitively "real world" reconstruction.

His account is characterized by common sense so absent from conspiracy buffs. "Little if any evidential value can be given to arguments by laypeople about a pilot's behavior if they have no experience of what a pilot navigating an aircraft could or could not have seen", he reasonably points out. Elsewhere he adds: "An argument that a thing cannot happen . . . collapses when there is evidence that it has already happened, somewhere else." These sensible observations are also damning indictments of the arguments of the spy buffs.

Due to an outage of navigation equipment at Anchorage, KE007 took off parallel to its intended track and probably made corrections by deciding to follow a magnetic heading of 246 degrees. They are known to have started out that way. When they reached their intended route they were to have turned a rotary switch one click to put the auto-pilot onto inertial guidance mode. Sayle suggests that this single switch throw was not made (he has several plausible suggestions why not), and he provides evidence that it could not have been made. He argues most persuasively that when the aircraft was last seen it was still following heading 246 sometime after it should have turned slightly to the left, and also that when hours later it was at last spotted by Japanese radar (along a track which it could have followed purely by a heading of 246 and with reasonable wind variations) it was still heading at 246! Sayle's expository narrative betokens a researcher well familiar with the terms and concepts he deals with, and to my mind his theory has the ring of truth to it.

Most of his early research was done under contract to a British television station which wanted to do a first anniversary special show. But when Sayle presented them the results of his research, the documentary was cancelled. He recalls what the executive producer told him:

"Conspiracies are sexy, accidents are not. We have to at least put forward the possibility that Reagan and the CIA were involved, or we don't have a viable program." Commented Sayle: "Well, that's show business."

Such a hitter jab is not entirely justified. In fact, the summaries of the arguments, as presented by American print and broadcast media on the first anniversary of the massacre, were notable for their responsible realism. Noted Geraldo Rivera, who had switched from that very flight shortly before takeoff, "It just COULDN'T have been a spy flight." There was nearly unanimous agreement in this judgment, which only enraged the spy theorists even further.

If such spy theorists seem nevertheless to get more media attention than they



deserve, they are highlighted even more strongly in the Soviet news media. Their opinions tend to fuel official Soviet xenophobia, which as an officially-cultivated policy has always proven a useful tool of tyrannies to keep the population in line. But their eagerness to find excuses for any Soviet brutality may go a long way toward encouraging a continuation of such actions. The Soviets are clearly ready to shoot down the next lost airliner, and an eager band of Westerners has proclaimed their own readiness to come up with excuses.

In its June 30 issue, the official Soviet military newspaper Red Star warned Soviet servicemen to be ready to replay the KE007 tragedy. "The incumbent U.S. administration, following a policy of state terrorism, has not ceased airborne espionage against the Soviet Union," wrote captain Yevgeniy Nikitin. "The airborne spies' activity is assuming increasingly sophisticated and dangerous forms. Under these circumstances, squalid new provocations can be expected from the American makers of irresponsible and aggressive foreign policy, provocations executed with blessing from [Reagan]."

Such venomous words are terrifying evidence that the USSR is ready, as it has stated explicitly on previous occasions, to kill again. Regrettably, the 269 dead of KE007 will probably be known as only the latest, but not the last, innocents to fail before Soviet weapons.

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KAL 007: FACT AND CYNICAL FANTASY // James E. Oberg

'The Target Is Destroyed'-- What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew about It, by Seymour M. Hersh (Random House, 282 pp., \$17.95)

Shootdown: Flight 007 and the American Connection, by R. W. Johnson (Viking, 335 pp., \$18.95)

OVER THREE YEARS have passed since the horrible death of 269 passengers and crew aboard Korean Air Lines flight 007, shot down by a Soviet jet just as it was completing a strange overflight of Soviet territory in the northwest Pacific. Mystery and confusion still enshroud this tragedy, and two recent books (the best and worst on the subject) help explain why: In "The Target Is Destroyed", a veteran investigative journalist, with great effort, pries loose some of the hitherto missing pieces of the puzzle; in Shootdown, a scholar betrays his craft for an ideological agenda.

The doomed Boeing 747 had departed Anchorage for its final leg to Seoul, when it almost immediately began to drift to the right of its planned track. Out of range of ground monitoring, the plane continued its drift, eventually winding up almost four hundred miles off course. Along that new route, it passed first over the heavily fortified Kamchatka Peninsula and then almost all the way across Sakhalin Island before Soviet Jets destroyed it.

What actually happened is difficult enough to reconstruct, and what American, Soviet, Japanese, and other intelligence organizations knew about it is an even subtler question. Besides tackling this many-faceted problem, Seymour Hersh grapples with the way people in Washington and Moscow interpreted the fragmentary data in terms of their own world views. Dozens of people in the American intelligence community talked with Hersh in depth, and he in turn assembled these interviews into a stunning reconstruction, a tour de force of detective work.

Although the U.S. has been accused by Moscow and by some Western authors of planning the

whole incident from the start, Hersh found no "smoking gun" of American complicity. Instead, he found overwhelming evidence that the flight was indeed off course unintentionally, and that this fact was not realized by any of the various American or Japanese intelligence units at the time. Hersh convincingly demonstrates that such deviations are regrettably far from rare. The bad fortune of the doomed airliner was that its deviation happened to place it in airspace guarded by some very trigger-happy, very confused, and very rushed Soviet military officers.

Hersh, as his book turns from the expository to the interpretative, condemns those in Washington for reacting with knee-jerk cold-war belligerence and needlessly exacerbating international tensions. This is a less convincing section of the book, given much of Hersh's own data.

To this reviewer, it seems debatable whether any hypothetical "calmer" Western reaction could have seduced the Soviets into coming clean, admitting a terrible error, and apologizing. They didn't do so in 1978 (for KAL902 over northwestern Russia), despite Western reaction almost over-eager to excuse their killing of two passengers and their attempted murder of all the others; they didn't do so in 1981, after killing all four men aboard a charter cargo airliner that strayed across the Iranian border, despite almost total Western amnesia on the entire event. So the tone of their paranoid reaction to the KAL-007 incident seems determined more by internal Soviet themes than by Western goading.

Since this book is so jam-packed with juicy tidbits of insider accounts, Hersh has no space left to grapple explicitly with the legion of looney-tune spy theories on the case. By ignoring them and assembling a solid reconstruction that utterly demolishes the foundations of such fantasies, Hersh perhaps gives them all the attention they deserve.

The ultimate in "blame America" illogic can be found in Johnson's *Shootdown*, a book so absurd that during one radio interview a questioner even suggested that it was a CIA plant designed to discredit the "spy-flight scenario" (Johnson sincerely denied this). The author describes himself as an Oxford politics don who was "satisfied [he] had mastered what [he] needed to know" about the case. The plane was sent deliberately, he asserts, probably to test Soviet radars: There is no way it could have gone off course by accident; there is no way American agencies could have failed to notice its deviation; there is no way its refusal to cooperate with Soviet interceptors can be seen as anything but an evasion attempt. Such is Johnson's case: Hersh, without mentioning a single spyflight nut by name, has already debunked each of these fantasies.

The process by which Johnson assembles his case is mind-boggling in itself. On the back cover (and you can judge this book by its cover), Johnson "quotes" a Reagan speech (while re-arranging and paraphrasing it extensively), then pompously quotes himself denouncing it, then appeals to "experts" with non-existent credentials or carefully edited corroborative opinions.

Incredible blunders abound. Expert reviewers have estimated the book contains upward of five hundred errors of fact, attribution, and logic. These range from the trivial (e.g., misidentifying the KAL-007 pilot in a photograph) to the substantial (e.g., completely garbling practically every translation from the Russian air-to-ground tapes) to the crucial (e.g., basing a key assertion on the existence of an actually non-existent over-the-horizon radar installation in Alaska). Johnson displays consistent incomprehension of basic principles of radar, of air-traffic control, of air navigation, of cockpit procedures, of statistics, and even of basic research techniques.

A comprehensive analysis could take as many pages as the original book, so a typical example must suffice. Johnson emphasizes crew behavior allegedly consistent only with a planned overflight of Soviet territory, and one of his leading examples is "1,800 pounds of paying cargo rather oddly left behind at Anchorage." Actually, Johnson created this illusion by misinterpreting an entry for "1,200 pounds" on documentation compiled by the crew prior to leaving Alaska. It was scratched out on one line; Johnson didn't notice it had been re-entered several lines below, in its proper place. The "1,200 pounds" was clearly labeled "D/H," for "deadheads," and as actually the accounting for the six extra KAL pilots and engineers hitching a ride home to Seoul. So it was never "paying cargo" and was ever left behind, oddly or otherwise

As part of a cynical promotion campaign for *Shutdown*, Viking took out newspaper ads promising full refunds to anyone dissatisfied with the book (it did this, according to a spokesperson, without having made any efforts to check the "facts" as presented in the book). The only justice in this long, tragic affair might be for a few thousand readers, outraged at the attempted intellectual swindle, to mail back their copies and use the refund to buy Hersh's book instead.