

'The war mentality always exists'

Professors share insights on Korean airliner incident

By Joan Herman
Of the Emerald

Although nearly a month has passed since a Soviet pilot shot down an unarmed civilian jet filled with 269 passengers, little is known about what really happened.

The Korean Airlines incident has elicited angry and conflicting accusations from each superpower against the other. Yet beneath the name-calling, confusion, doubt and fear prevails.

The Soviet Union has blamed the incident on the United States, saying the 747 jet was on a spying mission when it strayed into militarily sensitive and restricted Soviet airspace. In turn, Pres. Ronald Reagan has vehemently attacked the eastern superpower for its "crime against humanity." (TIME, Sept. 19).

Several prevailing questions remain: Was the United States in fact on a spy mission? Did high-ranking Soviet officials order the attack? What, if any, retributions should be taken against the Soviet Union?

Ultimately, the incident, says Russian history Prof. Alan Kimball, "raises the whole question of the suitability of the Soviet Union in the modern world." Kimball is also the Honors College director.

Several University professors who specialize in Soviet studies have their own theories as to why the incident occurred in the first place. All agree the Soviet action was unjustified, yet none are surprised by it.

Reagan has implied the attack was ordered by a high-ranking Soviet official. Political science Prof. Joseph Fiszman disagrees. Simply, the action exemplified the predominant Soviet philosophy to defend its borders no matter what or who invades them.

"I think it was a broadstanding order to defend the border. It was a decision made on the spot based on the judgment of local ground controllers, local commanders and the pilots in the air," says the Polish-born Fiszman who has lived in the Soviet Union.

As for the order coming from a high-ranking political official, Communist Party leader Yuri Andropov was vacationing outside of the Soviet Union when the incident occurred Sept. 1, and he did not return until a few days later. It was nighttime in Moscow and Communist Party leaders were sleeping when Flight 007 was shot down over the Sakhalin Islands — where it was daytime.

So the incident, in Fiszman's opinion, stems not only from a deep-seated Soviet paranoia about its borders, but also a breakdown in communication.

The Soviets assume that if they don't get the "enemies" now, "they will get me (the pilot) later," Fiszman says. "If something

should go wrong, then the pilot and those connected with him would have to pay a price. They would have to give a reckoning. They (the Soviets) believe the reversal of the old American colonialist adage, that the best Indian is a dead Indian.

"They believe that the safest penetrator is a dead penetrator. Better be safe than sorry.

"What is frightening about all this, if my hunch is correct, is that this makes the safety of the world even more iffy than we thought before, because what it means is that any kind of jackass flying a plane or any kind of bureaucrat manning the controls on the ground in an outpost could trigger a war," Fiszman says.

Math Prof. Sergey Yuzvinsky, who emigrated from the Soviet Union in January 1980, shares similar thoughts.

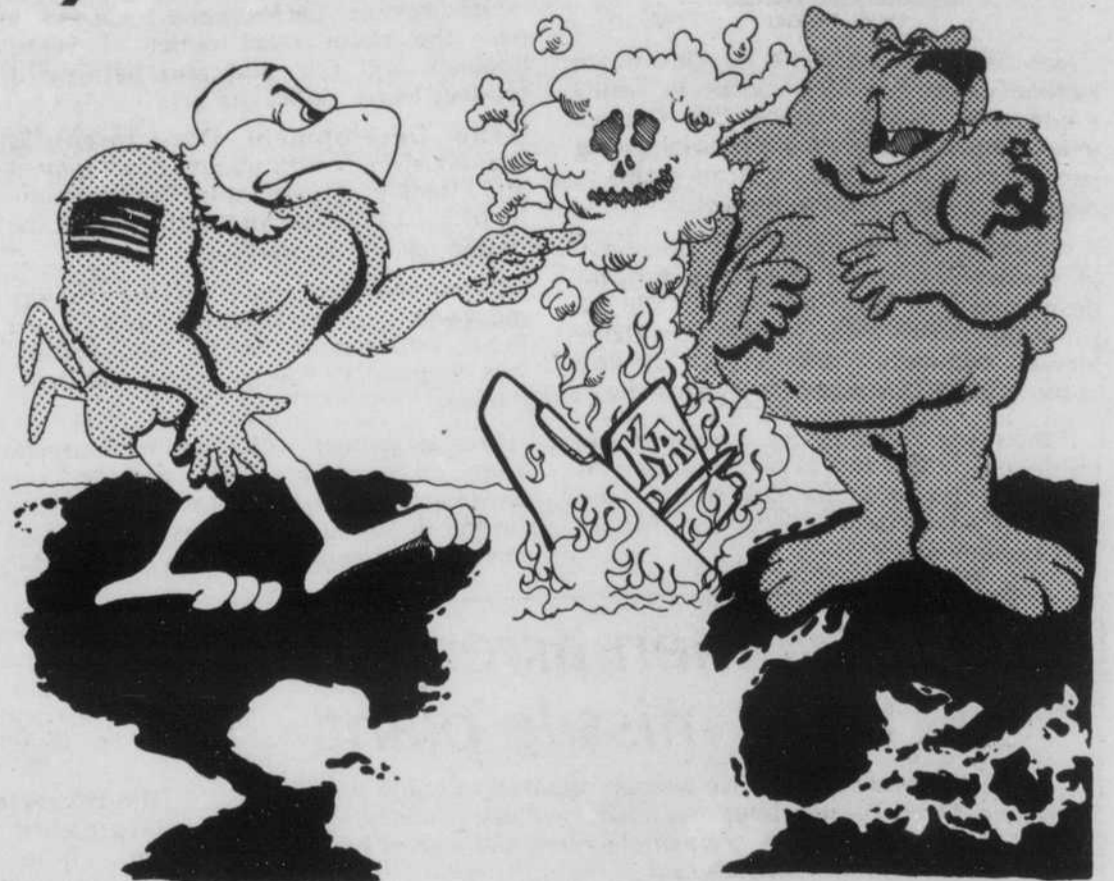
Unlike the Americans, who are taught to respect and cultivate human individuality, the Soviets learn to respect uniformity among people. The individual has no importance to society as a whole; the mass of humanity does.

So if Soviet people are possibly in danger — no matter how remote that danger may be, no matter who the "penetrators" are — killing a couple hundred foreigners is a small, logical price to pay in the majority of Soviet minds.

Most Americans do not understand this Soviet attitude, Yuzvinsky says, which is "very close to war."

"A young person is brought up with the word 'war' all around him," Yuzvinsky says. It is a war of ideologies: the Soviet's and everyone else's.

"The Soviet point of view is that everyone outside of the Soviet Union is an enemy. It



Graphic by Shawn Bird

stonewall, and when they can't stonewall, when they are forced to say something, they blame it on someone else. Never admit an error," Fiszman says. "Blame the victim, blame the victim — like now they are blaming the Koreans on being agents of the CIA.

"It's not a new story. In a sense, it's like a child doing some nasty thing — they always blame it on somebody else. 'Not me, not me,'" Fiszman says.

Although many Americans are as outraged by the Soviets' handling of the situation as they are with the original incident, their denial of any responsibility is politically

this was a dastardly act by American intelligence forces."

Although high-ranking Soviet officials know the "Russian excuse" is a lie, in time they will begin to believe it, Fiszman says.

"If you say something often enough, you begin to believe your own lies, your own inventions, your own fantasies. I am pretty sure Reagan believes it was an act of inhumanity, and it wasn't an error, but something that extends logically from the Soviet character."

Because the situation has put the Soviet Union in an "awful tough bind — and they ought to be," Kimball says, the United States "shouldn't let them off the hook."

Kimball believes the United States should "dig its heels in and demand a full, open, reliable account" of what happened. "Who is at fault is almost a secondary issue," he says. The main responsibility of all nations is to "make sure this never happens again."

All three professors believe Reagan should take sterner measures against the Soviet Union than he has so far.

"Pres. Reagan has a tendency to talk about the 'evil empire' and then to sell them wheat and high tech. Somebody said he talks loudly and carries a small twig," Fiszman says.

Although there has been some speculation as to how much effect U.S. embargos would have against the Soviet Union — because other nations might fill in the void — all three professors say Reagan should instigate a grain embargo. Contrary to what Reagan says, a grain embargo would

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— Joe Fiszman

doesn't matter who or what. The war mentality always exists," Yuzvinsky says. "There is always war."

Neither does the Soviet's "stonewalling" response to the incident surprise Fiszman. "Their handling of the situation follows Soviet traditions in such occasions," he says.

For example, during World War II, the Soviet army destroyed an entire army of Polish war prisoners in a forest in Katyn, located in the Smolensk area of Poland, Fiszman says. The Soviets didn't blame the attack on an obviously innocent party, but on the Germans, who could well have done it. But they, themselves, would never admit an error.

"The Soviet tendency usually is to

shrewd, Fiszman says.

There are "millions upon millions" of Soviets — and even some Americans — who believe the Soviet version, he says. "And those who do not believe it have doubts."

So the Soviets are not handing the world merely a "blank lie," Fiszman says, "because they are using something that is plausible enough to plant a seed of doubt in people's minds."

Most Americans do assume, without question, the United States cannot be wrong. Soviet citizens are no different in their views toward the Soviet government — especially when information is restricted, Fiszman says.

The Soviet citizens are being told what the Americans are being told, he says, "that

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Senate

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Professors are not supposed to abuse their "captive audience" by "indoctrinating" them with political opinions unrelated to the course.

Likewise, Sherwood argued, in the Assembly "the lectures often have not been technically related to the motion that was made."

Sherwood charged that liberal members have used the Assembly to express irrelevant views that should be discussed under other circumstances.

"It's been the forum for what I call lazy liberalism," he said.

But Senate members worried that the resolution would be impossible to enforce and would give too much power to the Assembly president, who would be able to rule irrelevant discussion out of order.

Both motions overwhelmingly failed, the first by a 26-4 margin, the second 27-3. Sherwood indicated he would bring the issue before the Assembly next month.

The Senate also decided to organize a committee that will investigate the question of "the student athlete and minimum academic standards," according to Gerald Bogen, who was reelected Wednesday as Senate chair.