

Escalating arms race not good reprimand

The strange and scary Soviet destruction of a South Korean passenger plane has drawn some equally strange and scary reactions.

Some people call Larry McDonald's death the first of World War III, through which they look forward to bringing the same destruction to the entire population of Russia; only in contrast to these Strange-likes can President Reagan's reaction seem moderate, limited as it is to rhetoric and the call for

ported by any evidence.

Reagan raised an interesting question when he asked how one can deal with a government that lies and kills in the way the Soviet Union has. Perhaps he should really consider the question instead of asking it rhetorically. Soviet society is not democratic, not liberal, not humane. It is as well to state this plainly. However, this does not relieve the United States from responsibility for its own expansionism. And more importantly, it does not relieve us from seeking to live in the world peaceably, even with the Soviet government.

Arms control has never been a high priority for the Reagan administration, although Reagan pru-

dently announced that the START talks would not be canceled because of the plane incident. Considering how suspiciously he views the Russians, and how eager he is to attribute every international event as something in which the Soviets are involved, it is strange that Reagan isn't pursuing arms control with energy and fervor. An oppressive government might much more easily use its nuclear arsenal because of the arbitrary ways it uses power and makes decisions.

A 60-day ban on flights to and from the Soviet Union would in part express the world's horror; more MX missiles and slackened arms control negotiations could only increase it.



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missiles. And some people are so edgy about a possible confrontation that they have only faint criticism, if any, for a brutal action that focuses the general cruelty and inhumanity of the Soviet government.

President Reagan is partly right in his Cold War evaluation of the U.S.S.R., but certainly wrong in wanting to return to the Cold War and escalate the arms race. If the Soviet government is bad, it need not follow, and doesn't, that our own government is good. For callous destruction of human life by our own "side," the "covert" civil war in Nicaragua — financed by the United States — is a current example.

It is of course true that this has happened before; the government of Israel destroyed a plane-load of people in 1973 when they were flying over the Sinai. This can hardly let the Soviet Union off the hook. For a government to intentionally shoot down what is known to be a civilian passenger plane is a barbarous action, whether it is done by an ally or by a government which is supposed to be our enemy.

Press coverage and official responses from the Soviet Union were revealing of the distortion in Russian society caused by an oppressive government. It was first reported that a Korean airplane violated Soviet air space, with no mention of its destruction; then Soviet readers discovered it had crashed, then that their government had caused it. All through the furor there were Soviet accusations that the plane was on a spy mission, which have so far been unsus-

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