

# Book Review

by Piet Luijken



## MiG's op de vlucht

### Vliegtuigdeserteurs in de Koude Oorlog

Dick van der Aart

This book is a nice, interesting read about a fascinating subject. The writer is clearly doing its utmost to interest the reader in this subject for which he has done so much research. In my opinion, the writer succeeds and should be applauded to publish such a book in Dutch, although an English version of this book in English is forthcoming.

To flee your county, to defect for political reasons, while in military service, is not really recommended. If your attempt fails, you will be sent to jail or even face the death penalty. But if you flee in a modern fighter, not known to the world in any detailed way, your future will be bright. Your request for political asylum will be issued instantly together with a nice financial bonus while you will be invited to brief many interested parties. Your fighter will be checked in depth before it will be sent back to its originating country, but only upon request.

The writer of this book, Dick van der Aart, works for both the Dutch NOS Journal and the NRC Handelsblad. He was very interested in this particular subject and has studied many of these cases for the last forty years. As most cases were kept secret for security reasons by all countries concerned, research was not very easy. When time passed on these cases, some documents were indeed released and included some nice details. But to get these details, you will have to dig deep in all kind of

archives. The writer did travel to many National Archives. But he also used the internet and other digital sources to expand his knowledge about a subject or to retrieve some new information. The writer also has collected many photographs related to these defected aircraft which have been used to illustrate the stories in a clear and convenient way, including some excellent colour photographs.

The book starts with the first defected MiG; on 5 March 1953, a Polish MiG-15bis landed on a grass runway on Bornholm, a Danish island close to the Polish border. This event did shock the whole free world, including the Danish Government. The Polish Government was demanding an expedite return of pilot and aircraft while the NATO countries were pushing the Danes to have them check this new aircraft in as much detail as possible. In the end, MiG-15bis 346 was disassembled and moved to Copenhagen, packed in crates. Two weeks later, it was shipped to Poland, which was, according the Danish Government, in the most expeditious way. These two weeks, together with a thorough debrief by the defecting pilot Lt Jarecki, were enough for the US and UK Intelligence Services to reveal many mysteries of this nimble fighter. Two weeks later, a second MiG-15bis landed at Bornholm and the whole show was played again.

The next chapters describe the defections of MiGs into Germany, Italy, South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, Japan and the USA. All events are described as accurate as possible. Not only is the route of the defection described in the most detailed way, but also the reason for the pilot to defect is clearly noted next to his life after receiving his asylum. Although the book is about defecting pilots in MiGs, fleeing from his communist country into a western country to get his much desired freedom, a small part is dedicated to Taiwanese defectors which flee in modern western fighters towards China to get reunited with their families. The writer has written the book in Dutch, trying to avoid too much aviation related jargon. He succeeds to keep the reader interested by good recaps and some cliffhangers. However, the chapter about the defections into Taiwan gets a bit repetitive in the end as the sequence of events is very similar in these cases. Fortunately, the next chapter is about the Israeli MiGs which were used in a later stage by the USA operating from Groom Lake, Nevada. All data is consistent with our Scramble database; only the description by the writer of the Northrop F-5F as an unarmed trainer or possible reconnaissance aircraft is not factual truth.



*The first defector in a MiG jet fighter flew from Poland to Bornholm in March 1953. His story is the start of this book and is followed by many more stories of defecting pilots and their precious jets.*