



Grounded: Frank Lorenzo and the Destruction of Eastern Airlines

By Aaron Bernstein

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In 1986, the president of Eastern Airlines and former astronaut, Frank Borman, set his airline on a collision course with Frank Lorenzo. Desperate to revive his failing talks with Eastern's unions, Borman began negotiating a sale with the man they feared most. Frank Lorenzo had built Texas Air and Continental into an empire through anti-union tactics and had earned him labour's hatred and the support of the big money-men like Drexel's Mike Milken. But Borman, blinded by his own arrogance, misjudged, and his beloved airline ended up with Lorenzo. "Business Week"'s Aaron Bernstein gives an account of this saga, which has implications for the future of American business. The wider failure of Eastern under Lorenzo marks the demise of the traditional tough-guy approach to management. In this age of techno-service, businesses cannot survive with embittered employees.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this tense, event-by-event account of the crash of Eastern Airlines in the late 1980s, as suspenseful as an air-disaster movie, Business Week reporter Bernstein presents Lorenzo as an obsessed anti-unionist. The Texas-based aviation empire he founded was crowned by the takeover of ailing Eastern Airlines, and his treatment of employees led to bitter, prolonged strikes and lawsuits that threatened to cripple national transportation. Union efforts on the employees' behalf to secure a purchaser for the near-bankrupt airline were thwarted by Lorenzo, who, in accordance with a 1990 court order, was removed from management in favor of a trustee, an order that the author considers a watershed in the labor policy of the Republican era.

Author tour.

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From Library Journal

This story of the acquisition of Eastern Airlines by the Texas Air Corporation is a fascinating exposé of management ineptitude, likely to become a classic case study. Bernstein gathered his material while reporting on labor matters for Business Week, and he focuses on the personalities in the deal. As he tells it, many important decisions that resulted in Texas Air gaining control of 15 percent of the air traffic in the United States were either misjudgments or were done in the heat of emotion. While Bernstein is critical of both labor and management, it is clear that he believes management caused a great deal of unnecessary misfortune for itself. This is a good companion to *The Battle for Eastern Airlines*, a video from PBS's excellent *Frontline* series. For more information, contact PBS's video service, 703-739-5380.

-Ed. -- Joseph Barth, U.S. Military Acad. Lib., West Point, N.Y.

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From the Publisher

The inside account of how Frank Lorenzo took over a sputtering Eastern Airlines and flew it into the ground. Author Aaron Bernstein, with access to major players including Lorenzo and his inner circle, former Eastern Airlines President Frank Borman, Peter Ueberroth, and union boss Charlie Bryan, explains how Lorenzo brought a corporate raider's mentality to running a business, which ultimately caused its failure.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Crouch:

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Mary Mohammad:

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