

**Volume 1**

**Number 102**

**The U-2 Incident - Part I**

**Lead: The capture of Francis Gary Powers set back U.S.-Soviet Relations for a dozen years.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: On the morning of May 1, 1959, Francis Gary Powers, an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency climbed into his reconnaissance aircraft and prepared to take off. His aircraft was the U-2, was black and cigar-shaped. Its wings were very long and designed to enable the plane to fly high in rarified**

**atmosphere above 50,000 feet. On the ground the wings had to be supported or the plane would tip over. As the ungainly but somehow elegant U-2 took off into the morning sky over Turkey, neither Powers or his handlers would know that this flight would result in a international incident that would begin the slide of a Russian leader from power, further the chance of change of American administrations and bring a dozen years of icy relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States.**

**Later that day operators at the radar station in Turkey noticed that the aircraft seemed to drop like a rock as it passed over the area of Sverdlovsk, at the eastern edge of the**

**Ural Mountains. Could it be that Soviet Union had at last been able to shoot down one of the elusive spy planes. So high did the plane fly, and so primitive was the technology of the Soviet surface to air missile system, that Powers was mostly likely disabled by a near miss explosion since he was able to eject himself and parachute to the earth.**

**At first President Eisenhower denied any responsibility for the flight. Later when Powers was paraded before the news media, an increasingly embarrassed Administration attempted to claim that Powers had no authority to venture into Soviet territory.**

**The fallout from the incident went far beyond the fate of Francis Gary Powers. He was tried, convicted and then exchanged for Soviet spy Rudolf Able in 1962. Khrushchev went to the Paris summit conference on the 15th of May and disrupted it completely, using the U-2 incident as an excuse. Next time the real losers from the U-2 incident.**

**"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Gann, Ernest Kellogg. *The Black Watch: The Men who Fly America's Secret Spy Planes*. New York, NY: Random House Publishers, 1989.**

**Geelhoed, E. Bruce. "Dwight D. Eisenhower The Spy Plane and the Summit: A Quarter Century Retrospective. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 1987 17 (1): 95-106.**

**O' Tolle, George J. A. *Honorable Treachery: A History of US Intelligence, Espionage and Covert Activity from the American Revolution to the CIA.* New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991.**

**Powers, Francis Gary. *Operation Overflight.* Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 1970.**

**Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.**