

When Russia Bagged The U-2

THE U-2 AFFAIR. By David Wise and Thomas B. Ross. 160 pages. Illustrated. Random House. \$4.95.

ON a scale unmatched in American history, the nation's policy and destiny today are being shaped by information, conclusions and decisions which are withheld from public knowledge. In waging its battle with the Communist world, our Government has had to fence off vast areas of activity from the view of its people.

Never has this been better dramatized than by the U-2 affair. In the words of authors David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, "a secret layer of government has developed spontaneously and established itself with the power to conceal its mistakes behind a claim of 'national security.' . . . It has mushroomed to vast proportions outside the normal checks and balances of the Government. It is largely ignored until its existence is exposed by a celebrated failure such as the U-2."

In their thoroughly researched and skillfully written account, the authors cover all phases of Francis Gary Powers's ill-fated flight of May 1, 1960, two weeks before the Paris summit conference. They trace the development of the aircraft itself, its adoption by the CIA as a high-flying camera platform, and the formation of a secret group of civilian pilots to fly these daring and dangerous missions. They make revealing preparations into the characters involved in this, the greatest spy story of our age.

A Nightmare

Piecing together information obtained from published records, wire service dispatches, hundreds of interviews and their own personal observations, Wise and Ross painstakingly reconstruct the events of May 1, 1960, and immediately following. The result is a picture of Government machinery grinding its gears—a machine for a handful of top-level men who saw one mistake after another.

The sequence of events works for itself. Soviet Premier Khrushchev announced the American plane had been shot down. The United States



Francis Gary Powers holds a model of his U-2 plane during his appearance before a Senate committee after Russia released him.

Khrushchev exposes the lie by producing Powers. The United States hedges, admitting the flight but denying that it was ordered by Washington. The implication that anyone less than the President controls such an enormously significant venture so worries Mr. Eisenhower that he assumes full responsibility. In announcing this, authorities imply that the flights will continue.

Faced with this situation, the Soviet Premier had little choice but to use the unprecedented summit meeting as a stage to denounce the United States. It was not the U-2 that torpedoed the summit, the authors conclude, for all flights had been going on for four years, and the Russians knew it. Rather, it was the mounting uncertainty which the crisis was met by the "keepers" in Washington that caused the greatest damage.

The Matter Of Living

As the authors point out, the U-2 was not a secret weapon. It was a tool for gathering intelligence. The authors argue that the U-2 was not the cause of the crisis, but rather a symptom of a larger problem: the lack of communication and coordination between the CIA and the State Department.

other words, they were worried not so much that the U-2 might endanger the summit as that the summit might endanger the U-2. These persons, the authors say, feared that a successful summit might lead Washington to ground the U-2.

The question of Powers himself—traitor or hero—is still unanswered in many Americans' minds. This book should clarify many points and eliminate many misconceptions. In the authors' view, Powers flew the U-2 as a vocation, not out of dedication. He should not be made a scapegoat for what happened, for the biggest mistakes were made in Washington. Powers was neither hero nor traitor. "He was an ordinary man put out on an extraordinary mission."

Ross and Wise, Washington correspondents for the Chicago Sun-Times and the New York Herald Tribune, respectively, acknowledge that their book was written without the official cooperation of the Government agency or institution, and over the opposition of some. They describe the sources of their material insofar as possible, and some of the detective work necessary when writing about current history in such a sensitive area. They are turned out