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U-2 Fell on Front Page 5 Years Ago

Washington, May 1 (UPI)—The news item from Turkey on May 1, 1960 was brief. It said simply that a United States research plane had vanished on a high-altitude weather mission near the Turkish-Russian border.

Other details were scanty—until Soviet Premier Nikita Khrush-

chev startled the world with the announcement that the plane was a U.S. reconnaissance craft on a photo-intelligence mission over the Soviet Union. At the controls was former Air Force pilot Francis Gary Powers, 32.

The incident mushroomed into one of the most embarrassing

episodes of U. S. diplomatic history. It sparked Congressional inquiries into the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency and made Powers a figure of continuing controversy.

Today, five years after Powers bailed out of his crippled U-2 near the Soviet industrial center of Sverdlovsk, no one knows for sure what caused the high-altitude aircraft to crash.

Following his imprisonment in Russia and subsequent return to the U. S., Powers told a Senate committee that he didn't know what happened. But it is generally believed that he was shot down by a ground-to-air missile as Russia claimed.

Khrushchev used the U-2 inci-

dent to wreck a plan and May 16, 1960, summit conference in Paris by demanding that President Eisenhower publicly apologize.

The Soviet premier also snatched back his invitation to Eisenhower for a Moscow visit.

Start of the Mission

Powers' reconnaissance mission began in the early hours of Sunday, May 1, 1960, at Incirlik air base, near Adana, Turkey. He pointed his glider-winged craft across the Russian-Turkish border and headed for Sverdlovsk, 1,300 miles inside the Soviet Union.

At an altitude of about 68,000 feet, Powers said, he "felt and sensed an explosion." His plane fell out of control. He bailed out at about 15,000 feet, landed, and choosing not to use a poison-tipped needle he carried, was immediately taken prisoner.

The U.S. at first claimed he was off on a routine weather mission, but admitted the U-2 was a spy plane after Khrushchev produced not only Powers, but photographs of the fallen U-2.

Exchanged for Abel

Powers, convicted of spying, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. But in February, 1962, he was exchanged for the Russian master spy, Col. Rudolf I. Abel.

The CIA later said it had no duct during or after the flight. He left the agency and now is at the company that manufactured the U-2.

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