

POWERS 4/22 NX

ADV FOR AMS SUN. APRIL 26

"I'D DO IT AGAIN"--U2 PILOT POWERS

BY DONALD E. MULLEN

NEW YORK (UPI)--TEN YEARS AFTER HIS U2 SPY PLANE WAS SHOT DOWN OVER RUSSIA, FRANCIS GARY POWERS FIGURES HIS CASE MAY HAVE STARTED THE "CREDIBILITY GAP" ISSUE BETWEEN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR GOVERNMENT.

HE ALSO WANTS THE KREMLIN TO KNOW THAT HE IS NEITHER SORRY NOR REPENTANT FOR HAVING BEEN A SPY PILOT AND THAT HE WOULD DO IT AGAIN "IF THE JOB WERE NECESSARY."

THE CIA PILOT'S SURVIVAL OF THE MAY 1, 1960 CRASH, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S DENIAL OF HIS PLANE'S MISSION AND NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV'S TRIUMPHANT DISCLOSURE THAT HE HAD CAUGHT THE UNITED STATES IN A LIE WAS A BLOW THAT TURNED UP THE COLD WAR, CHILLED U.S. PRESTIGE ABROAD AND EMBARRASSED AMERICAN CITIZENS.

POWERS HAS BEEN WAITING YEARS FOR OFFICIAL PERMISSION TO TELL HIS SIDE OF THE STORY. AND NOW HIS BOOK "OPERATION OVERFLIGHT," COAUTHORED BY WRITER CURT GENTRY, IS READY FOR 10TH ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION.

THE BOOK, VIEWED THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES OF THE TUMULTUOUS 1960S, HAS FEW SURPRISES ABOUT GOVERNMENT SNAFUS THAT HAVEN'T BEEN REPEATED IN THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION OR THE PUEBLO CRISIS. IT DOES, HOWEVER, TELL THE STORY OF ONE PERSON, NEITHER A MILITARY MAN NOR A JAMES BOND TYPE SPY, WHO GOT CAUGHT IN THE WORLD POLITICAL GRIST MILL AND BROUGHT HOME TO AMERICANS THE FACT THAT COLD WAR GAMES AREN'T PLAYED WITH BOY SCOUT RULES.

POWERS, NOW 40, HASN'T CHANGED MUCH IN APPEARANCE SINCE THE DAYS OF HIS SPECTACULAR SHOW TRIAL IN MOSCOW WHERE HE PLEADED GUILTY TO SPYING AND TOLD THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE HE WAS "REPENTANT." AT AN INTERVIEW THIS WEEK HE APPEARED FIT AND RELAXED. HIS FACE IS STILL BOYISH UNDER SLIGHTLY GREYING HAIR. HE ANSWERED QUESTIONS WITH A SOFT SOUTHERN ACCENT, AND WITH THE QUIET CONFIDENCE OF A MAN WHO BELIEVES HE DID THE BEST HE COULD.

"I FEEL EXACTLY ABOUT THE U2 FLIGHTS AS WHEN I FIRST FOUND OUT ABOUT THEM," HE SAID. "I THINK INTELLIGENCE IS NECESSARY FOR SURVIVAL AGAINST THIS TYPE OF ENEMY. THIS PROGRAM WAS A GREAT SERVICE TO THIS COUNTRY AND THE WORLD. WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD CONDUCT A PROGRAM LIKE THIS I FELT LIKE A 10-FOOT-TALL AMERICAN.

"I STILL THINK THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WERE PROUD OF THE FACT OF THE U22 FLIGHTS. . . . NOT PROUD OF THE FACT THAT I WAS SHOT DOWN AND WENT THROUGH THIS VERY BAD PERIOD OF TIME. I'LL BET YOU THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY FELT THE SAME WAY I DID -- THAT WE WEREN'T JUST SITTING STILL AND GETTING PUSHED AROUND."

IN HIS BOOK POWERS CLAIMS THAT WHEN HE ASKED HIS INTELLIGENCE OFFICER BEFORE THE ILL-FATED FLIGHT WHAT HE SHOULD DO IF SHOT DOWN, THE ANSWER WAS: "YOU MAY AS WELL TELL THEM EVERYTHING, BECAUSE THEY'RE GOING TO GET IT OUT OF YOU ANYWAY."

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE NEVER DISCLOSED ANYTHING THAT HE DIDN'T THINK THE RUSSIANS KNEW ALREADY, KEEPING SECRET THE ALTITUDE OF HIS PLANE AND DETAILS OF OTHER U2 FLIGHTS.

"IF I HADN'T ANSWERED THEIR QUESTIONS I THINK THAT I WOULD HAVE BEEN SHOT THE FIRST WEEK. THEY KEPT SAYING THAT I WAS MILITARY, THAT I HAD PERFORMED AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION. I HAD TO KEEP SAYING, NO, I AM NOT MILITARY, I WORK FOR THE CIA. I HAD A GREAT FEAR THAT THEY COULD RETALIATE AGAINST MILITARY AGGRESSION, BUT THAT THEY ONLY

*File*

*JOS*

*CIA.OW Powers,  
Francis Gary  
CIA.0216-2  
Sec. 4.01.2 Operation  
Overflight  
Orig.  
Under Power*