protest this flight... it strengthened assumptions in Washington that they would swallow more U-2 fights. Bissell requested and got a delay for Operation Grand Slam. Eisenhower ordered that “one additional operation may be undertaken, provided it is carried out prior to May 1. No operation is to be carried out after May 1.” The White House understood that the Soviets would be particularly offended by a violation of their airspace on May 1, their most important national holiday. However, the order was so carelessly phrased that Bissell understood the instruction to mean that if need be, he could send a U-2 over the Soviet Union on May Day.

LENINGRAD WAS SPORTING new colors in May 1960. That year the traditional blood-red banners with Marxist-Leninist haiku celebrating May Day had some unusual competition. There were greens and newly painted yellows on some buildings, and along the main railway line to Moscow, new fences were sprouting. Russia’s second city was undergoing a face-lift in preparation for a special American visitor, a man whose military exploits in the Second World War had earned him a place in Soviet hearts. Now president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower was expected to arrive on a state visit in mid-June.

No American visitor of any kind, however, was expected that spring in Povarnia, a village near Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains. But at about 11:00 A.M., local time, on May 1, villagers heard an explosion, and in the upper sky an orange and white parachute appeared with what looked to be a man hanging from it. Home for the May Day holiday, P. E. Asabin was startled by the sound and ran out to the street, where he was in time to see a column of dust rise and then fall on the village. As he started talking to a neighbor about this strange noise, Asabin observed that many people were running out of the village toward something. Then, not more than ninety feet away, he could see a man in a parachute coming toward him. “I ran immediately to his side and caught up with him, just as he landed.”

V. N. Glinskich also saw the mysterious parachutist. Glinskich was at work on the collective farm, spreading manure using one of the fancy, by Soviet standards, automatic dung distributors, when he heard the bang. “Then I suddenly glimpsed in the sky,” Glinskich later told the KGB. “High up I could see some kind of balloon. . . . When the balloon fell closer, then it became clear to me, that this was a parachutist.”

There were some official watchers that day too. At the command dispatch
point of the Sverdlovsk civilian airport in Koltsovo, two KGB officers, Captain V. P. Pankov and Lieutenant I. A. Ananeyev, witnessed the morning show. Concerned that this was some kind of enemy paratroop action, they called the chairman of the local collective farm, M. N. Berman, with an order that the stranger be detained. Moments later the two KGB men were off on their motorcycles toward the nearby village.

Meanwhile a gaggle of townspeople reached the parachutist. At first they assumed he was a Soviet. "Fsy o poriatke? [Is everything okay?]," they asked as a few tried to help him out of his parachute, radio helmet, and flight suit. But the pilot or spaceman or whatever he was couldn't understand them. As it became clear that he wasn't Russian, the wonder turned to suspicion and fear. One of the villagers saw a holster with a pistol and, on the parachute harness, what seemed to him like a Finnish hunting knife. Another saw another parachute, this one red and white, descending from even higher up in the sky. Using sign language, the villagers asked the soldier, "How many are you?" The alien put up one finger. This brought some relief. But the villagers decided to act before the authorities arrived. The man was pushed into the back of a car, a two-cylinder Moskvich, and driven over to the house of Berman's driver, who could take the stranger in the collective farm's service car to see the boss at headquarters.3

Captain Pankov and Lieutenant Ananeyev were already at the headquarters of the collective farm when the stranger arrived. A nurse took a look at the man. He had a slight abrasion on his right leg, but aside from an elevated pulse, he seemed normal. Then the KGB took over. Pankov and Ananeyev had no experience interrogating strange parachutists. But there was a procedure for this, as there was for almost everything in the KGB. The villagers had brought along the man's helmet and overalls. The helmet had radio gear installed, so the man must have been a pilot of sorts. Oddly the overalls told more. Stitched into the side was a leaflet topped by an American flag and an inscription in several languages, including Russian: "I am an American and do not speak your language. I need food, shelter, assistance. I will not harm you. I bear no malice toward your people. If you help me, you will be rewarded." Once they filled out all the paperwork on the American pilot, the KGB men had to take this fellow to Sverdlovsk, the nearest city where there was a major KGB center with an English-speaking interpreter.

In Sverdlovsk, Francis Gary Powers finally met someone who could speak at least broken English. He gave his name as he was required to do, as if he were a prisoner of war. The KGB interpreter was fascinated by a pin that he had found in the one of the pockets of the overalls that the villagers had taken from Powers. "What is this needle for?" "It is an ordinary needle, used for ordinary things." The Geneva Convention said nothing about describing suicide devices.

Khrushchev did not yet know who Francis Gary Powers was, but the illegal flight of his U-2 spy plane over the USSR had been on the Soviet leader’s mind from the moment he awoke on May Day. Ordinarily the first secretary’s family accompanied him to Red Square for the traditional parade, but this year the routine had been broken by a telephone call from Malinovsky at 5:00 A.M.3 The Soviet defense minister told Khrushchev that less than half an hour earlier a foreign plane had been detected crossing north into Soviet territory from Afghanistan. Having been severely reprimanded by the Presidium for not shooting down the U-2 that had violated Soviet airspace on April 9, Malinovsky was determined that this U.S. spy plane would not get away. He ordered a halt on all civil air traffic over most of the Soviet Union to facilitate the pursuit.6

Khrushchev tried to conceal the developing story from his family, telling them only that he would have to leave first for the Kremlin, and they were to follow later in another car. Subdued and preoccupied, he ate his breakfast without saying a word. His son, Sergei, knew not to ask what the matter was: "A great deal could happen in our vast country that we were not supposed to know at home." But Khrushchev could not hold the secret long. Walking to his car with Sergei, he said, "They flew over again. "How many?" his son asked. "Like before—one. It's flying at a great height. This time it was detected at the border, at the same place."8

From the initial reports, Khrushchev knew that the U-2 was already near Tyuratam, the site of three of the country's now five ICBM launchpads. When asked by his son before leaving the residence whether the Soviet air defense command would catch this intruder, Khrushchev did not show his customary optimism. What he found so infuriating was how well, and how easily, the American spy planes revealed the weaknesses in Soviet defenses. "[The Soviet military chiefs] claim that they'll shoot it down—unless they miss," Khrushchev replied. "You know perfectly well that we have only a few T-3s [high-altitude interceptor jets] there and that missiles have a small operational radius at that altitude. It's all up to chance."9
As Khrushchev's limousine sped off to the Kremlin, it seemed as if the Soviet military would confirm his pessimism. Because of the national holiday, there weren't many T-3s available to scramble, and some of the Soviet air defense missile sites that Powers passed on his way north were not even manned. But around Sverdlovsk Powers flew over two battalions armed with the Soviet Union's new S-75 surface-to-air missile (SAM).

Soviet commanders ordered the first battalion to fire on the intruder. Two missiles jammed while being launched, but one was fired successfully. Exploding just behind the U-2, it caused the fragile plane to break apart. In the confusion, the second SAM battalion also fired a salvo, hitting one of the MiG-19s pursuing the U-2 at a lower altitude and causing the death of the Soviet pilot. It was the red and white parachute of that mortally wounded airman that Powers and the townspeople of Povarnia had seen in the sky.

Khrushchev was already standing on the balcony of Lenin's Tomb reviewing the colorful waves of May Day celebrants when he received news of the capture of the American pilot. The commander of Soviet air defenses, carried by the newfound pride of his service, rushed to the platform. Marshal Sergei Biryuzov was still dressed in his combat uniform, rather than the full-dress uniform he would have worn for the May Day celebration. This breach in protocol caused a minor stir in the Kremlin family section behind the dais, where the Soviet elite strained to read meaning into Biryuzov's unusual appearance.

Khrushchev was delighted to hear that this time the American intruder had not gotten away. Immediate instructions were sent to Sverdlovsk to bring the pilot to Moscow. The chairman of the KGB, Aleksandr Shelepin, and the procurator general of the USSR, R. A. Rudenko, who had represented the Soviet Union at the Nuremberg war crimes trial, were to conduct the interrogation themselves. Powers was to be held and questioned at the dreaded Lubyanka, the KGB's headquarters just north of Red Square.

There was a plan on the shelf to deal with a failed mission. Four years earlier Bissell had developed the false story to be put out if a U-2 were ever lost over hostile territory. The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (reorganized as the National Air and Space Administration [NASA] in 1958) would issue a public statement that it had lost contact with a U-2 conducting high-altitude weather research. At the time Bissell proposed this cover story, two of President Eisenhower's closest scientific advisers—Edwin Land, the owner of Polaroid, and James Killian, the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—had raised objections. In their view it would be better for the United States to own up immediately to this high-level espionage as a regrettable requirement of the Cold War. The White House, however, accepted Bissell's plan, which by 1960 had become standard operating procedure.

The plan was silent on what to do if the pilot survived. This was a curious oversight because U-2 pilots had survived crashes during training. In December 1956 a U-2 pilot suffering from high-altitude sickness had flown his plane too fast, causing it to disintegrate at a very high altitude over a test ground in Arizona. The pilot managed to eject the plane's canopy and was sucked out of the cockpit at twenty-eight thousand feet. He parachuted to safety. There were other stories of pilots surviving malfunctions, but none had been shot down. Perhaps the oversight also reflected an assumption that no U-2 pilot would allow himself to be caught alive.

Eisenhower learned of the plane's disappearance on the afternoon of May 1. He was at Camp David and received the news by telephone. The president was told simply that the U-2 was overdue. More than anyone in his administration, he dreaded hearing this kind of news. He felt completely responsible for the U-2 flights. He approved each individually, and he had never found the decision easy to make. Twice he had imposed moratoriums on these flights because of his concerns that they were too provocative. Now he faced a potential failure just before the long-awaited superpower summit. It would be hard to imagine a more inopportune moment.

Even though it was possible the plane had gone down, Eisenhower had reason to hope the Soviets would not be able to learn much about the mission. He had been assured that the fragility of the U-2, which was really more of a glider than an airplane, made it impossible that the pilot and the sensitive equipment aboard would survive impact. "This was a cruel assumption," Eisenhower later acknowledged, "but I was assured that the young pilots undertaking these missions were doing so with their eyes wide open and motivated by a high degree of patriotism, a swashbuckling bravado, and certain material inducements."
Detailed Interrogation of Francis Gary Powers began immediately after his arrival in Moscow on May 1. The prisoner was led from his cell into a large room with a long table. There were about twelve people there, though only two mattered. The setting was stark and forbidding, but Powers at least could be thankful that his questioners abstained from any kind of torture, including the nonlethal but nevertheless annoying tactic of shining a bright light into a prisoner’s eyes. The KGB report on his first interrogation concluded that he had “answered all questions.” The authors of this book are the first scholars to have had access to the official Soviet interrogations of Powers. In fact Powers said very little of consequence and nothing proscribed by the CIA’s policy for captured pilots. He had been instructed in training that were he to be captured he was “perfectly free to tell the full truth about their mission with the exception of certain specifications of the aircraft.” True to these guidelines, Powers admitted he was a civilian working for the CIA but concealed that he had “answered all questions.” The authors of this book are the first scholars to have had access to the official Soviet interrogations of Powers.

The hard questioning began two days later, on May 3. The KGB chief, Shelepin, asked Powers how he had been able to maintain radio contact from a high altitude. The question bothered Powers. As he well knew, the U-2s were outfitted with radios, but the pilots had strict instructions on when to use them. When the pilots reached cruising altitude and were about to enter enemy airspace, they were expected to click their radio switch to signal that the mission was a go. Then they were to maintain absolute radio silence until they landed at a friendly base. Powers had followed procedure on May 1. He had maintained radio silence even during those harrowing moments after he heard the explosion near his plane.

Powers feared that if he answered the question honestly, it would lead to other questions that might enable the Soviets to figure out that the U.S. government had no evidence that he had survived the attack on his aircraft. Powers believed that the Soviets would be much less likely to kill him if the Kremlin assumed that Washington thought he was still alive. For the first time since his ordeal began, Powers dropped the façade of cooperation. “I don’t believe I can answer that question,” he said, “it would not be in my self-interest.”

The interrogators pushed him. “But it is in your interest to answer it.” Powers still refused to answer, but he perceived an advantage to exploit in his interrogators’ interest in the radio question. Perhaps he could use this issue to force the Soviets to announce publicly that he was alive, thereby ensuring he could not be held indefinitely or killed without international knowledge. “My mother is very sick,” Powers replied. “If I do not answer the question, your government might report in the press that I am still alive, and this would be very welcome to me.”

Powers’s performance worked. Shelepin and Rudenko were now convinced that the American pilot was indeed hiding something important. Powers’s U-2 had initially zigzagged away from one of the SAM sites protecting Sverdlovsk, and the Soviets suspected that the CIA had been able to warn him about this site in flight. Shelepin and Rudenko pressed Powers for more details: “When would you answer this question?”

Powers stalled, deciding to hold off on any further discussions about deals. “I don’t know . . . .” he replied. “It seems to me that it would be more to my advantage not to answer than to answer this question.”

The KGB chief and the chief prosecutor were perplexed by his stubbornness. “We insist that you answer this question,” they said. If a deal was not possible, then he might yet be bullied into talking. “If you don’t answer then it is not only not in your interest but it would be damaging to you.” Powers would not give up. “I would prefer not to answer,” he said.

Powers’s display of nerve in the Lubyanka coincided with the release of the prearranged cover story in Washington. On May 3, NASA issued a statement that a joint NASA-USAF Air Weather Service mission had apparently gone down in the Lake Van area of Turkey. “During the flight in eastern Turkey,” said the release, “the pilot reported over the emergency frequency that he was experiencing oxygen difficulties.” The deception was transparent to the Soviet authorities, but it was to have a side effect never imagined by the CIA’s Bissell. The reference to an “emergency frequency” increased the KGB’s impatience at getting the captured U.S. pilot to divulge what he knew about the U-2’s communications capabilities.
The anonymous letter had at least one fan in the top leadership of the Kremlin, Marshal Voroshilov, who insisted on showing his sympathy for military critics of Khrushchev's efforts to cut defense spending.26 "Is it correct for us to reduce allotments for the construction of [civil air] shelters?" Voroshilov had asked at a Presidium meeting in late April in defiance of Khrushchev's proposed defense budget. This comment had been reported to Khrushchev, who had been absent from the meeting.27

The news about Powers did not initially provoke Khrushchev to alter his strategy for the Paris summit. The Soviet leader still clung to an almost mystical belief in Eisenhower's personal desire for peace. At a New Year's Eve party a few months after his return from the United States, Khrushchev told the U.S. ambassador, "If only [Eisenhower] could serve another term, he was sure that our problems could be solved."28 Khrushchev perceived the American president as being nearly alone among his advisers in this regard. Until the death of Foster Dulles in May 1959, Khrushchev had held out little hope that the genial Eisenhower would get his way. Now that the president seemed to have the upper hand in Washington, Khrushchev believed that the hard-liners around Eisenhower were doing whatever they could to derail the summit. He also suspected that Allen Dulles, the director of central intelligence, had intentionally ordered the U-2 mission to disrupt the improvement of relations between Eisenhower and him. The Soviet leader was not about to give the American spy chief the satisfaction of letting that happen.

Khrushchev's concerns about the importance of Eisenhower's personal engagement in the summit extended to the composition of the U.S. delegation. In April the president had alerted Khrushchev that were the conference to last more than a week, he would have to leave for Lisbon to honor a previous commitment to the prime minister of Portugal. In his place the delegation would be headed by Richard Nixon. Khrushchev disliked Nixon, whom he associated with Foster Dulles's approach to the Cold War. Khrushchev believed that somehow the United States would define its interests differently if Nixon rather than Eisenhower was heading the delegation. Khrushchev assured the French that he did not intend to hang around Paris to negotiate with the U.S. vice president. "I don't respect Nixon," he told the French ambassador in Moscow.29

Khrushchev convinced himself that he could exploit the U-2 incident to strengthen Eisenhower's hand against the hawks around him. On April 28 he had used the occasion of a speech in Baku celebrating forty years of Soviet
rule in Azerbaijan to warn the world that recent U.S. actions were complicating preparations for the summit. With the American pilot Powers in Soviet custody, he now had even better proof of the Eisenhower administration's apparent schizophrenia. Khrushchev planned to reveal enough about the U-2 mission to embarrass hard-line American cold warriors without pushing the president so far as to endanger the summit.

As the interrogations of Powers began at Lubyanka Prison, Khrushchev decided that the French, his future hosts, should be the first Westerners to get an inkling of his new worries about Washington. Meeting with the French ambassador, Maurice Dejean, on May 1, the same day as the U.S. announcement of the lost weather mission, Khrushchev warned the ambassador that "he had real reason to doubt the desire of some of the leaders to find a solution to the problems under discussion." He did not reveal that reason but used the conversation to outline his concerns about the machinations of those in the United States who did not want to pursue détente. In a message dated April 30, de Gaulle had suggested that perhaps some of the meetings in Paris should be held behind closed doors. At the meeting with the French ambassador, Khrushchev couched his rejection of secret sessions in terms of not wishing to give Western hawks any opportunity to ruin the summit. Secret discussions, he believed, would shield the opponents of détente from international public opinion. Thus, he concluded, the summit "could be reduced to zero."

Khrushchev also mentioned to the French that he would be sharing his assessment of the international situation with the party leadership during the session of the Supreme Soviet scheduled to open on May 5. "My report will establish, in an incontestable manner, that there are people who do not wish a détente and who instead are seeking a return to the cold war." He added: "At this moment, I cannot reveal the evidence I am talking about."

Two days later, as Khrushchev had told the French he would, he released some of the evidence to the Supreme Soviet. In the midst of a three-and-one-half-hour speech outlining his domestic reform package, he reported that on May 1 a U.S. plane on a mission of "aggressive provocation aimed at wrecking the summit conference" had violated Soviet airspace and been shot down. Observing that this action was only the latest sign that the "imperialists and militarists" around Eisenhower were gaining strength, Khrushchev expressed his confidence that the president still wanted the upcoming negotiations to succeed though he faced a tough task in controlling his own administration. The Soviet leader singled out the new American secretary of state, Christian Herter, Assistant Secretary of State C. Douglas Dillon, and Vice President Nixon as representatives of the harder line. He referred to the possibility that Nixon might replace Eisenhower at the Paris talks as "leaving the cabbage to the care of the goat." Saying that disarmament and a "peaceful settlement with Germany, including the question of West Berlin," were the "vital problems of the day," Khrushchev indicated that he still intended to go to Paris, though he held out less hope that anything would be accomplished there.

Khrushchev spoke from a position of strength. The day before, the Presidium had approved a series of leadership changes that he had designed to increase his influence in that body. Brezhnev was chosen to replace Marshal Voroshilov as Soviet president, a purely ceremonial post, but one that Brezhnev later used to acquire his own power. Voroshilov was to be removed from the Presidium in July. Khrushchev also removed two former protégés, Nikolai Belyaev and Aleksei Kirichenko, from the Presidium. He blamed Belyaev for recent agricultural failures in the "virgin lands" of Kazakhstan. Kirichenko's reappointment to the Soviet embassy in Czechoslovakia had been arranged a few weeks earlier, but any hope that he could retain a seat on the Presidium was dashed. Meanwhile Khrushchev added three new allies as full members of the Presidium: Aleksei Kosygin, Nikolai Podgorny, and Dmitri Polyansky.

In his speech to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev never mentioned Francis Gary Powers. In fact he said nothing about the fate of the pilot of the downed American plane. For the moment Khrushchev preferred to let Washington tangle itself in its own lies.

The first leak to Washington that Powers might be alive came from a most unlikely source. Jakob Malik was a veteran Soviet diplomat who was as uninformative to foreign diplomats as he was trustworthy to the Kremlin. But perhaps drink or age got to him at a reception at the Ethiopian Embassy that followed Khrushchev's Supreme Soviet speech. In response to a question from the Swedish ambassador about the fate of the pilot, Malik responded, "I don't know exactly. He is being questioned." No one as yet suspected the American pilot was alive. Malik realized his mistake immediately and tried to explain away his gaffe. In reporting this incident to the Soviet Foreign Ministry later in the day, he explained that there was little reason for anxiety that the Swedish ambassador would tell the Americans. "He is neutral, after all."

U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson, who had been within earshot of the conversation at the reception, did not need the Swede to give him a special report. At 7:00 P.M., Moscow time, he cabled the first intelli-
gence the administration had that Powers was still alive. Thompson was not 100 percent sure—he could not have been—that Malik was telling the truth. In his dispatch home he mentioned the “possibility” that Powers was alive.36

A few hours before the cable arrived, Eisenhower had convened the National Security Council to discuss how to maintain the cover-up. The talk at the NSC was about what Khrushchev had said in his speech on the plane’s having been shot down. No one as yet was prepared to contemplate that the pilot or any incriminating piece of the plane could have survived.37

Eisenhower’s instincts were to stick with the NASA cover story and not say any more. Secretary of State Herter and his other advisers pressed him to authorize a new statement that would show that the United States—despite Khrushchev’s bluster—stuck by its original (and false) explanation. “I accepted the recommendations of my associates,” Eisenhower later recalled, and the United States headed further along the murky road of international deceit.38

Officials at the State Department announced that the president had authorized an “inquiry” to determine how this plane managed to violate Soviet airspace. The department also stated that the plane mentioned by Khrushchev might be the NASA science plane whose “pilot reported difficulty with his oxygen equipment. It is entirely possible,” the statement added, “that having failure in the oxygen equipment, which could result in the pilot losing consciousness, the plane continued on automatic pilot for a considerable distance and accidentally violated Soviet airspace.”39

After Thompson’s cable entered the bureaucratic bloodstream in the afternoon, the administration still had a hard time believing that Powers could have survived this crash. Nevertheless, the State Department reflexively prepared a diplomatic note requesting information on Powers’s condition. It was to delivered to the Soviets the next day.

POWERS KNEW NOTHING of the drama in Washington. In Moscow his interrogations continued, eleven hours a day, every day. Shelepin returned on May 6 to put more pressure on Powers. By reiterating in its May 5 statement that a U.S. pilot had reported oxygen difficulties, the State Department had unknowingly hardened the KGB’s belief that the U-2 pilot must have maintained contact with his base. Once again Shelepin put the question to him. Again Powers refused to answer. “Your silence does not help your situation,” the KGB chief responded.40

As he had the very first time he had been asked about the U-2’s radio capabilities, Powers brought up the medical condition of his mother, who he was sure would be saved by news that her son was still alive. This time Shelepin decided to make a direct offer to him: “If you honestly answer this question, then you will be given the chance to write your mother a letter.” Powers refused to give up what he believed was the last card that he had to play: “Give me the chance to write my mother a letter and to receive an answer and I will answer all of your questions.”41

THE OFFICIAL “INQUIRY” from the State Department about Powers’s condition and word from insiders of Jakob Malik’s mistake prompted Khrushchev to reveal finally that Powers was alive and under arrest. At the closing session of the Supreme Soviet on May 7 he told his audience and the world what had actually been found in Sverdlovsk on May Day, squeezing every ounce of drama out of the story. To a chorus of “shame, shame,” Khrushchev unfurled photographs alleged to be from the film in Powers’s cameras. To a chorus of “bandits, bandits,” he produced the needle that had been dipped in poison for the U-2 pilot to commit suicide. In describing the foreign currency and gold that Powers had carried along on his flight to bribe his way home, Khrushchev made fun of the CIA’s precautions: “Why was all this necessary in the upper layers of the atmosphere?” He had an answer: “Or maybe, the pilot was to have flown still higher to Mars and was going to lead astray Martian ladies?”42

NEWS THAT POWERS was alive stunned Washington. Eisenhower was both surprised and angry. Khrushchev had mentioned many details in his speech about the U-2 program, especially the highly classified detail that flights actually took off from a secret airfield in Pakistan and not from Turkey. Eisenhower assumed Powers had “started talking as soon as he hit the ground.”43

Commenting on Khrushchev’s revelation, the U.S. ambassador in Moscow advocated admitting to the act of espionage without suggesting that the president had personally authorized the mission. “This would preserve for us,” Thompson argued, “[the] great asset we have in the regard which Soviet and other people have for [the] President.”44

Initially Washington took Ambassador Thompson’s advice. In response to this latest Khrushchev performance, the administration formally acknowledged that the U-2 had been on an intelligence mission but that the mission was unauthorized: “As a result of the inquiry ordered by the President, it has been established that insofar as the authorities are concerned, there was no
authorization for any such flights as described by Khrushchev." As the administration had hoped, the world press reported this statement as if President Eisenhower himself had not authorized intelligence missions over the Soviet Union, thus giving the impression that the CIA had acted alone, as some kind of rogue element in the federal government.45

Washington's allies reacted with grave concern about the effect of this incident on the forthcoming summit. Publicly the British and French leaders showed support for the American president. Privately they castigated him. "The Americans have created a great folly," Prime Minister Macmillan confessed to his diary. The British leader had very good reason to be annoyed. The Paris summit had been his idea. He believed in the power of face-to-face meetings to shape high politics in a positive manner. He was also no stranger to the problem of balancing espionage and diplomacy. The British, who received U.S. spy planes on loan, were participants in the top secret USSR overflight program. Macmillan had suspended these flights weeks before the summit and had been told that the Americans would do the same.46

Macmillan wanted to minimize the consequences of the American mistake. He sent word to Eisenhower that Washington should take a leaf from the British book in such matters. In the meantime the British government steadfastly refused to acknowledge any intelligence activities. In fact the country's foreign intelligence service, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), had no formal legislative existence. Macmillan wanted Eisenhower to say nothing.

The president was unhappy with the way his administration's official explanation of the U-2 affair was developing. He disliked the implications of what his ambassador in Moscow and the British prime minister were suggesting. How could he let the world think that U.S. airplanes could violate Soviet airspace, an act of war, without higher authorization? In the nuclear era, when millions of people could be destroyed by solitary planes carrying hydrogen bombs, an unauthorized flight was inexcusable.

He ordered the State Department to correct the record. On May 9 Secretary of State Herter retracted the earlier characterization of the flight as unauthorized. In its place, the secretary announced that such flights, while violations of international law, were necessary in the real world of Cold War politics. The administration's new position was that the president had authorized the U-2 operations in general, though not this flight in particular. The Soviets had refused to accept President Eisenhower's Open Skies proposal in 1955 and so had reaped the U-2 program as one of the consequences. Herter made no mention of the role of U.S. public opinion in pressing a reluctant Eisenhower to pursue the U-2 overflights so dangerously close to the summit. Both the international press and the Soviets interpreted Herter's statement to mean that the United States was determined to continue its policy of overflights of Soviet territory.

The KGB's efforts to break Powers continued in spite of Khrushchev's dramatic announcement. To keep the pressure on him, the pilot was not told that the world knew he was alive. But after two more days of Powers's repeating that he would not discuss the U-2's radio capabilities unless he was in open court or had received evidence that his parents knew he was alive, Shelepin concluded he would have to switch tactics. On May 10 Powers was shown the front pages of Izvestia and the New York Times of May 8, which had reported on Khrushchev's statement that the U.S. pilot had survived the crash. The interpreter read from Izvestia Khrushchev's comment: "We also have the pilot, who is alive and kicking." He read as well from some regional U.S. newspapers, one of which quoted Powers's father saying, "I'm going to appeal to Mr. Khrushchev personally to be fair to my boy. As one coal miner to another, I'm sure he'll listen to me." This broke the tension in the room. Hearing his father's voice in those words, Powers began to cry.47

Powers then said he was ready to answer the one question that had obsessed his captors since the beginning of this ordeal. Although he still had no intention of telling the whole story to the KGB, he now thought he could risk a useful half-truth because there would be an international scandal if the KGB killed him during the interrogation. "There were no radio communications of any kind from the moment of my takeoff to the moment when I was shot down," he said, carefully covering up the radio signaling all U-2 pilots did before entering Soviet airspace. "I was capable of contacting my base only a half hour before landing," he added. "In fact, the radio on the U-2 had only a 400 to 500 mile range." The range of the radio on the U-2 was actually much greater, the reason why radio silence had to be maintained, but the Soviets did not need to know that.

"You didn't radio in when you were shot down?" Shelepin responded incredulously.

"I didn't even have the opportunity to send any kind of signal," replied Powers.

"Why didn't you tell us this earlier?" asked the KGB chief.

"If you knew that I did not have any contact with my base and that the peo-
ple of my service did not know what had happened to me,” Powers explained coolly, “then you would probably not have published that I was alive and what had happened to me.”

This truthful response evoked unexpected candor from the KGB chief. “The issue is not with you,” said Shelepin. “The matter is that the USA committed an aggressive act.” He then explained that he believed Powers’s flight was a deliberate provocation to scuttle the summit due to begin in only a few days. “Why else were you sent?” asked Shelepin.

Powers’s response was curt and patriotic. “I don’t know why I was sent. There must have been good reasons.” He then proceeded to offer the same rationale that President Eisenhower later gave in his first public defense of the flight. Powers recalled that he had once read in the newspaper that there were fears that the Soviet Union was planning to attack the United States. When his interrogators explained that it was difficult to differentiate between an intruder on a spy mission and one on a bombing run carrying thermonuclear weapons, Powers explained that he refused to accept that his government was taking unnecessary risks. It needed this intelligence.

In spite of Secretary Herter’s statement, Khrushchev continued to believe that the U-2 flight had been orchestrated by one of Eisenhower’s opponents in Washington. He might have thought differently if he had heard Eisenhower himself admit to sending the spy plane, but since that hadn’t happened, Khrushchev intended to go ahead with his policy of demilitarizing the Cold War in 1960. Preparations continued for the long-awaited official visit of Soviet air chief, Marshal Konstantin Veshinlin, to the United States. Veshinlin was due to leave on May 14 for Washington, where he would be the guest of the Pentagon. In the same spirit Khrushchev let the Foreign Ministry proceed with its preparations for the Paris summit. He made no effort to redraft any of the summit proposals that had been under review since early April.

Khrushchev was beginning to wonder, however, whether he had selected the right partner in Eisenhower. His uncertainty about the degree of the president’s complicity in the U-2 flight was on display two days later, when he and Marshal Biryuzov went to view the wreckage of the U-2 plane, which the Soviets had put on public view in Gorky Park. To the journalists at the park, Khrushchev lamented the difficult pressures on the well-meaning American president from the hard-liners around him. He singled out Secretary of State Herter for attack: “Far from feeling guilty and ashamed of aggressive actions, he justifies them and says they will continue into the future.”

But for the first time Khrushchev was clearly finding it difficult to hold to his policy of not attacking Eisenhower personally for the outrage. “I was horrified to learn that the President had endorsed the acts,” he said in response to a question about whether the State Department’s May 9 statement had affected his opinion of Eisenhower. He still spoke of the importance of a successful summit and alluded to a future Eisenhower visit to the USSR, but a new tentativeness had crept into his words. “I am a human being and I have human feelings. I had hopes and they were betrayed. . . . you must understand that we Russians always go whole hog: when we play, we play and when we fight, we fight.”

The Presidium gathered the next day, May 12, to place its official stamp on the instructions and proposals that Khrushchev and the Soviet delegation were to take with them to Paris. No stenographic account from that meeting exists. Later there were rumors that the Presidium was split over whether Khrushchev should go. But Mikoyan did not recall this as an episode in the story of Khrushchev’s struggle with the Foreign Ministry, and it was not cited in the bill of particulars against him when he was overthrown in October 1964. Instead what is known is that the Presidium endorsed the entire package of proposals and draft negotiating instructions that Gromyko’s team had been preparing for over a month.

Indeed, Khrushchev was authorized to show flexibility on general housekeeping matters in Paris. If his Western counterparts refused to commit to a negotiating agenda, he was to let this pass. The goal was to foster a discussion with the powerful people who made decisions for the West. With regard to the U.S. delegation, the instructions had both sweet and sour elements for Eisenhower. Khrushchev was to remind the president of the fruitful discussions they had during his visit to America: “Negotiations between the USA and the USSR,” he was supposed to say, “have exerted very good influence on the international situation and, as hoped by the Soviet Union, could lead to a very good start in the direction of the establishment of general relations and cooperation between our countries.”

Khrushchev would have one demand for the Americans: The Kremlin expected the United States to undertake measures to stop all future intrusions into Soviet airspace. “The Soviet people hope not only to live in peace, but in friendship with the American people.” Ending the U-2 flights was a prerequisite.

While clearly the product of a sincere effort to achieve a successful summit, the instructions on Berlin displayed a crude understanding of how to achieve results at a summit. In discussing how to handle these proposals in Paris, the Presidium did not provide for any fallback positions. Instead it
decided that the negotiations on this point “should be conducted in such a way to leave no doubt among the Western powers in the Soviet Union's determination to complete a German peace treaty in order to liquidate the remnants of the past war, in particular the occupational regime in West Berlin."

On disarmament, the Soviets had something more to offer. They were going to push hard for the dismantling of nuclear delivery devices in the first phase of general and complete disarmament. On the issue of inspections, Khrushchev was open to some form of on-site verification by foreign observers of the destruction of ICBMs and intercontinental bombers. Although the proposals were still very vague, they were less likely to be dismissed out of hand by the Western powers. Something might indeed come out of them.

In the days before he left for Paris, Eisenhower had some idea of what Khrushchev might propose at the summit. The United States had known since early April to expect that the Soviet leader might use the meeting to spell out what he had meant by an interim Berlin agreement in his conversations with de Gaulle. After the Soviets submitted their final proposals to the French on May 9, they had been translated into English for the president. The French had also briefed their NATO allies on the Soviet interest in the French proposal for eliminating the means of delivering nuclear weapons. At NATO meetings in late April and early May the Western powers had discussed what this arrangement might mean in practice. Of all the participants, the American delegation was most hostile to the idea. Secretary of State Herter called the French interest in this proposal “embarrassing to the West” and believed that the Soviets would find a way to cheat, rendering the whole concept of mutual disarmament very risky without an elaborate international inspection body.

Eisenhower was neither optimistic nor pessimistic about what could be achieved in Paris. He was not as dismissive of nuclear disarmament as his new secretary of state, but he planned to continue to insist on verification and wondered if Khrushchev would ever go along. On Berlin, Eisenhower saw little room for negotiations. He just wanted the Soviets to accept the status quo. Change might be possible around the edges, perhaps involving a reduction in the strength of allied contingents in West Berlin. With his approval, the State Department had started speaking of German self-determination instead of German reunification. In other words, if the Soviets thought that a change was required in the Germanys, then there should be an all-German vote or at least an all-Berlin vote. The United States was convinced that in either case the German people would vote for liberal capitalism, not Marxism-Leninism.

The U-2 affair distracted Eisenhower from his preparations for the summit. Instead of calmly weighing the arguments that he was receiving from the British and his own Soviet expert in Moscow about how to handle Khrushchev, he was preoccupied with reestablishing his leadership over national security. In his memoirs the president argued that he believed he had an obligation to take responsibility for this act. “To deny my part in the entire affair,” he argued, “would have been a declaration that portions of the government of the United States were operating irresponsibly, in complete disregard of proper presidential control.” As supreme allied commander during World War II Eisenhower had made some difficult and controversial decisions. He had never shirked responsibility for deciding whether to proceed with the Normandy landings, to give gasoline to General George Patton’s Third Army, or to try to beat the Russians in a race to Berlin.

On May 11 Eisenhower used a press conference to remove any doubt that he had authorized the Powers mission. Press conferences were difficult for this president. He never seemed able to get through one without getting tangled in his own syntax. Sometimes he did it intentionally. Before a press conference in 1955, Eisenhower had assured his press secretary, James Hagerty, “Don’t worry, Jim . . . I’ll just confuse them.” Sometimes the slipups were unintentional. Now, on May 11, Eisenhower spoke unusually clearly. “No one wants another Pearl Harbor,” he said. Because of the secrecy in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union, the United States had to resort to espionage. It was a “distasteful but vital necessity.” Otherwise how could the United States keep track of those military forces that are “capable of massive surprise attacks”? Eisenhower wanted to reduce secrecy in international affairs because he knew how incompatible it was to security. For this reason he had made his Open Skies proposal in Geneva in 1955 and planned to renew that offer to Khrushchev in Paris. In the meantime he was not about to be apologetic about the need for espionage.

Ten years later, as a pensioner, Khrushchev recalled how angry he had become when he learned that the White House had refused to stick with its denial of responsibility for authorizing Powers’s mission. “A long as President Eisenhower was dissociated from the U-2 affair,” Khrushchev
replied, "we could continue our policy of strengthening Soviet-US relations, which had begun with my trip to America and my talks with Eisenhower." He also

Eisenhower's statement put Khrushchev in a corner. Building up the prestige of the Soviet Union—in other words, U.S. respect for its power—was as essential to his program of constructing socialism as achieving détente in Europe and trade with the West. Yet the U.S. president's words suddenly made superpower détente and Soviet prestige appear to be irreconcilable concepts. "Here was the President of the United States," Khrushchev recollected later, "the man whom we were supposed to negotiate with at the meeting in Paris, defending outrageous, inadmissible actions!"

Khrushchev may have learned of Eisenhower's statement before the Presidium meeting that approved his instructions on May 12, but he didn't allow it to alter his careful strategy for the summit. The first sign of the explosion to come was the announcement the next day that Marshal Veshchina would be postponing his trip to the United States. But it was not until May 14, the very day he was supposed to go to Paris, that Khrushchev revealed to his colleagues how upset Eisenhower's embrace of the U-2 incident had made him.

At Vnukovo Airport, Khrushchev hastily assembled Malinovsky and Gromyko for an impromptu discussion with Presidium members who had come to see the delegation off. Khrushchev's foreign policy aide, Oleg Troyanovsky, recalled that this took place in a glass-enclosed VIP lounge not far from the plane. Once aboard the I-18 for the flight to Paris, Khrushchev announced that he had effectively thrown away his prepared script. With his aids huddling around him, he said that he wanted his speech for the next day rewritten. His staff would have to prepare it quickly once they arrived in Paris, so that it could be sent back to Moscow for formal approval by the rest of the Presidium. Khrushchev would insist on an apology from the United States as the price for his participation in the summit. If he didn't get it, the Soviet delegation would leave Paris without divulging any of its proposals on disarmament or Berlin.

In Paris the delegation moved into the Soviet Embassy. The group was in a mild panic. The new speech needed to be completed and approved in a hurry and then translated into French and English. Gromyko's deputy moaned to those who had time to listen, "What a situation, what a situation." Khrushchev was now prepared to sacrifice the summit to get an apology from the Americans for the U-2 affair. He wanted Eisenhower to swallow his words and retract his defense of overhead reconnaissance: "A sovereign state cannot let the American president get away with his perfidious statement." He also expected the United States to punish those "directly guilty of the deliberate violation" of Soviet airspace and to declare that "in future it will not violate the state borders of the USSR with its aircraft." Khrushchev still believed that Allen Dulles had been solely responsible for Powers's mission. All he wanted was for Eisenhower to admit this. In hammering out this new position, Khrushchev wondered if there were any way he could compel the president to apologize. Then he thought: "[W]e couldn't possibly offer our hospitality to someone who had already, so to speak, made a mess at his host's table." He would threaten to withdraw the invitation he had given Eisenhower to visit the USSR in June. "We were charged up with explosive ideas," Khrushchev later said.

The next morning Khrushchev handed a copy of his six-page declaration, including the demand for an apology from President Eisenhower, to his host, French President Charles de Gaulle. Implicitly he wanted the French leader to pressure his American counterpart to give in, to allow the negotiations to continue. He stressed that the Americans were seeking to live by a double standard in international politics. "The United States has on more than one occasion declared that if Soviet planes appeared over U.S. territory, the United States would start a nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Why is it, then, that when the situation is reversed they do not expect the same reaction? What is this unilateral right that they claim?"

Khrushchev expected some sympathy from de Gaulle, who was himself chafing at U.S. power. As he had explained to the Presidium in February, when he first presented his French strategy, Khrushchev knew that ultimately the French position alone would not determine whether there was a détente. However, he had worked hard to bring de Gaulle into his camp, above all by planning to associate the Soviet disarmament proposals with the French strategy of destroying nuclear delivery vehicles. The summit was in Paris, and de Gaulle would assuredly not want a failure. Yet despite good reasons to expect the contrary, the French president refused to play into Khrushchev's hands. After listening to the Soviet leader's explanation of his new demands, the Frenchman showed absolutely no sympathy. All nations spy, said de Gaulle, and the issue of the U-2 was a matter between the United States and the Soviet Union. He did not want Khrushchev to lose sight of the big picture. The summit was designed, de Gaulle reminded him, to push ahead on the larger questions of international politics. If the Soviets thought they had to leave Paris, that would be unfortunate, but it would be up to them
to decide what they needed to do. After meeting with de Gaulle, Khrushchev went to see Macmillan, to warn that the summit was in trouble if the Americans did not admit their mistake. The British prime minister also expressed the wish that Khrushchev not allow the U-2 incident to undermine this significant opportunity to improve international relations.

**Eisenhower arrived** in Paris on May 15 to reports of Khrushchev’s last-minute insistence on an apology. At meetings with the French and the British leaders at 2:30 and 6:00 P.M., Eisenhower discussed the meaning of the Soviet demand. He was firmly against giving an apology, even at the risk of losing the state visit to Moscow. He did not believe that it would come to that, however. He shared the hope of his Western colleagues that Khrushchev would back down if told that the alternative was a failed conference. None of the participants held out much hope for a breakthrough on Berlin. All agreed that an interim agreement that specified an agreement within two years was tantamount to a new Soviet ultimatum and was unacceptable. But the three Western leaders believed that enough progress could be made in the area of disarmament to persuade Khrushchev to stay.

For all their confidence that disarmament was the right subject to discuss with the Soviets, the Western leaders could not agree on how to respond to Khrushchev’s interest in eliminating bombers and missiles. As Khrushchev had planned, the French were sympathetic toward the Soviet position. De Gaulle not only saw real possibilities for an arms control agreement that limited nuclear delivery devices but also believed that an arms control agreement would take the sting out of Khrushchev’s threatening policy toward Berlin. In private talks with the French and the Americans, Macmillan was a little more helpful to Khrushchev. He was worried about a collapse of the summit. Unlike de Gaulle, Macmillan thought the United States should consider apologizing for authorizing the U-2 flight.

**Monday morning**, May 16, the long-awaited summit began. The French had picked an elegant venue for these discussions, but the events of the previous day cast a pall over the proceedings. The leaders and their closest advisers were escorted to the second floor of the Elysée Palace. Khrushchev shook hands with Macmillan as he entered but did little more than acknowledge the presence of Eisenhower and the American delegation. For Khrushchev, it was a matter of only signaling, “Okay, we see you.”

Khrushchev delivered the first address. Uncharacteristically, he stayed on message for forty-five minutes, avoiding the temptation to stray from his text. “In a situation like this I knew I couldn’t speak off the top of my head. Every word had to be exact...” He repeated the three demands that he had outlined for the French and the British the night before. If they were not met, Khrushchev vowed, he would leave Paris, and Eisenhower would no longer be invited to visit the Soviet Union in June.

Khrushchev believed that these demands could be acceptable to Eisenhower. He convinced himself that as Eisenhower listened to the translation of his text, he turned to Christian Herter and said, “Well, why not? Why don’t we go ahead and make a statement of apology?” Khrushchev believed he heard this and repeated this story to others, before consigning it to his memoirs. Eisenhower and Charles Bohlen, who sat nearby, each denied this. It was an interesting sidelight into Khrushchev’s psychology that despite all the evidence he had at his disposal, including Eisenhower’s own statements, he refused to believe that Eisenhower supported the U-2 policy.

Eisenhower was well prepared for Khrushchev’s speech. Although he would not apologize, he pledged that he would satisfy one of Khrushchev’s three demands. There would be no more overflights of Soviet territory. He also had something else to promise. As he had signaled in his pre-summit press conference he resurrected the 1955 Open Skies proposal. This time he suggested using airplanes under the control of the United Nations, instead of Soviet or U.S. spy planes, to perform the surveillance in the hope this might be more acceptable to Moscow.

Eisenhower did not understand the depth of Khrushchev’s hatred of the idea of opening Soviet airspace to foreign planes. Neither the State Department nor the CIA had been able to tell him that one of the main reasons Marshal Zhukov had been fired in October 1957 was that he insisted on trying to get Khrushchev to agree to the Open Skies proposal. Allowing U.S. observation of the Soviet strategic forces would undermine Khrushchev’s risky plan to restructure the Soviet Union and defend the socialist world despite the Soviet Union’s strategic inferiority. How could Khrushchev redeploy assets to the civilian economy if the United States knew how very weak he was? The Americans feared he had 150 intercontinental ballistic missiles, or would have very soon, whereas he had about 4 and expected a mere handful more in 1960. The United States, which already enjoyed a huge lead in strategic bombers, already had 12 ICBMs.

There was an awkward moment after Eisenhower spoke. “Nobody knew what to do,” Khrushchev later recalled. Then the U.S. delegation left, and the day’s
meeting ended. Khrushchev's motives and actions from that point on became increasingly erratic. Having staked so much on Eisenhower, he found that he had no real strategy once it became clear the president would not apologize.

Khrushchev sent a bizarre cable to his Kremlin colleagues to sum up the session. It was defensive and affected a hollow, optimistic tone. "The situation, as it has developed here, demonstrates once more the wisdom of the line we have taken. The NATO allies of the U.S. though they are trying to save American face are striving for our participation in the summit."76 It was true that the French and the British wanted the Russians to keep negotiating. But there was no evidence that they would work on his behalf to bring about an apology from Eisenhower. Khrushchev's cable seemed to be saying that success was possible, but it is doubtful that he really believed it.

After dinner, Macmillan, the leader who most wished to avoid having the summit collapse, called on Khrushchev at the Soviet Embassy and asked him to stay. "I cannot say that there is not a cloud in the sky, but if we stayed here we have taken. The NATO allies of the U.S. though they are trying to save American face are striving for our participation in the summit."76 It was true that the French and the British wanted the Russians to keep negotiating. But there was no evidence that they would work on his behalf to bring about an apology from Eisenhower. Khrushchev's cable seemed to be saying that success was possible, but it is doubtful that he really believed it.

After dinner, Macmillan, the leader who most wished to avoid having the summit collapse, called on Khrushchev at the Soviet Embassy and asked him to stay. "I cannot say that there is not a cloud in the sky, but if we stayed here another 2-3 days, establishing the bases for extended discussions of the issues, then the meeting could be adjourned and we would leave with the feeling that continuity had been preserved," Macmillan argued.77 He also tried to downplay the importance of the U-2 for Soviet prestige. Like de Gaulle, he reminded Khrushchev that all countries spied on one another. "There are microphones hidden in every embassy," said Macmillan. "We discover them every day and by evening new ones have taken their place. They are everywhere, even in ink wells. . . . I could show you these devices." Referring to the Soviet Embassy reception hall where he was meeting Khrushchev, Macmillan added for effect, "Certainly such devices are even in this room. So let's not be hypocrites."

Macmillan pleaded with Khrushchev to find a way to stay in Paris, to continue his participation in these important discussions. "I ask you as a friend to pay heed to what I am saying to you. . . . I repeat, I ask you as a friend not to push the matter to a head today or tomorrow, go forward, to cross into the next stage."

Khrushchev indicated that he saw a way out of this mess. He repeated to Macmillan his strong belief that Eisenhower was not really responsible for the U-2 flight, that it was Allen Dulles's idea. The CIA chief had pressured the U.S. president to go ahead with the flight, and now Eisenhower was protecting Dulles. All Khrushchev wanted was for Washington to admit it had been wrong to act so insolently. "The Soviet Union is not Cuba, not Guatemala, not Panama, not Iceland." At the end of the meeting Khrushchev seemed moderately optimistic about the next day. He thanked Macmillan for the opportunity to discuss the summit and then turned plaintive. "I ask you, though, go work on President Eisenhower." Embedded within all this talk, however, was a single line that revealed how very difficult this summit had become for Khrushchev: "I don't believe Eisenhower now."78 Khrushchev, the man who was so often the captive of strong assumptions, had seen an influential one shattered.

From the start of May 17, Khrushchev acted as if he had already decided that the Soviet delegation and he would have to leave Paris. Before Macmillan had even had a chance to see Eisenhower, Khrushchev arranged an impromptu press conference on the sidewalk in front of the Soviet Embassy. He said he thought that he would be leaving France very soon. Just the day before, he had assured de Gaulle that he would be making no public statements. Then Khrushchev and Malinovsky headed off in a motorcade of press and embassy personnel toward the battlefield of the Marne. In World War I, Malinovsky had been stationed with imperial Russian troops outside Paris. He wanted to show Khrushchev the little village of Pleurs-sur-Marne where he had once been billeted.

As the Soviets left for the Marne, the Western leaders gathered to discuss their next move. Eisenhower again told Macmillan and de Gaulle that he could not accept the Soviet ultimatum. De Gaulle, in a last gesture to save the summit, suggested that Khrushchev be invited to meet with them at 3:00 P.M. A message was sent to the Soviet Embassy requesting Khrushchev's attendance.

Khrushchev spent the entire morning enjoying his bucolic visit to the village of Pleurs-sur-Marne. The son of Malinovsky's former landlord entertained the party with some bottles of wine and some cheese. Malinovsky and Khrushchev started drinking, and the Soviet defense minister told stories of his time there. "I got the impression," Khrushchev later said, "that the old woman [the wife of the deceased landlord] didn't want to indulge in those memories: she kept an expression of indifference on her face."79 The drinking continued long enough that Malinovsky also started talking about women he had known. "Malinovsky was a man who loved women, especially beautiful women," observed Khrushchev. As the tales got more colorful, the crowd of French townspeople joining in grew larger. Despite the passage of four decades, Malinovsky could still speak a little French. It was quite a spectacle.

The happy group returned to the Soviet Embassy in the early afternoon. It seems that Khrushchev was given the French invitation at least by 2:00 P.M. Without responding to the invitation, let alone going to the meeting, or call-
ing de Gaulle or Macmillan, Khrushchev decided that the summit was over for him. It is fair to wonder how sober he was at that moment. The cable he sent to the Kremlin was clear, though: “The change in the situation that would have permitted us to stay has not occurred. Therefore we have decided to leave Paris.” It was 2:15 P.M. Khrushchev also recommended to the Presidium that the East Germans be instructed to invite him to speak in East Berlin on his way home. He wished to reaffirm his commitment to solving the German problem. It was revenge served cold for Eisenhower’s humiliating him over the U-2.

As for the three world leaders awaiting his decision that day, Khrushchev wanted nothing to do with them. He instructed a low-level diplomat to convey a message to the French: “If the question was to discuss what had been discussed yesterday, then the meeting would be acceptable, but not before 5 P.M. because Khrushchev had had no lunch. However, if other questions were to be discussed, then Mr. Khrushchev would not attend.” The message was a deliberate fiction. “Mr. Khrushchev” had already decided that he would not attend any meeting. Later that evening he sent word to the French that he would be leaving Paris the next day after conducting a press conference.

When Eisenhower heard of the brushoff from Khrushchev, he was so angry he could not bring himself to say the Soviet leader’s name. Khrushchev became “this man.” De Gaulle was also fed up with Khrushchev, whose disappearing act to the Marne was the last bit of boorishness the French leader was prepared to stomach. Macmillan, who knew enough not to try to force the Americans to accept Khrushchev’s conditions, was intensely disappointed. “The Summit—on which I had set high hopes and for which I worked for over 2 years—has blown up, like a volcano! It is ignominious; it is tragic; it is almost incredible.” In many ways he blamed his old friend Dwight Eisenhower for not exercising good judgment in the weeks leading up to the meeting.

The world’s newspapers covered the collapse of the summit as a great calamity. Despite the U-2 affair, expectations had grown in the weeks preceding the event. Now that nothing had come of the meeting, the general disappointment was equally exaggerated.

In Moscow the KGB lectured Francis Gary Powers on how his flight had caused the collapse of the summit. Powers replied that it was wrong to assume he was a patsy in some kind of right-wing conspiracy to wreck U.S.-Soviet relations; “Whoever organized my flight, in my opinion, did not want to disrupt the summit. If they had known that this flight would break up the summit, they would not have done it.” When he was asked to condemn the aggressive acts of the American “reactionaries,” he politely declined. “If I consider these flights as necessary to protect the security of the United States, I will not condemn them.”

In Washington the administration had its own theories about why the summit collapsed. Led by the two longtime Soviet watchers, Tommy Thompson and Charles Bohlen, the U.S. government came to believe that Khrushchev had used the U-2 affair as an excuse to back away from the summit. Many in Washington still could not quite understand the politics of Khrushchev’s January announcement of a unilateral cut in the Soviet armed forces. Their thinking was that Khrushchev faced enormous opposition from the military to his plans for a détente and so needed a real breakthrough on Berlin in Paris to shore up his authority in the Kremlin. When it became clear to him in April that the West would not reconsider its opposition to the free city proposal and that it was firmly committed to stationing NATO forces in West Berlin, Khrushchev scouted around for a pretext to call off the summit. The ill-fated Powers mission gave him that excuse.

Eisenhower seemed to share this view of what had happened in Paris. The day after the summit collapsed, he offered this explanation in a letter to the president of Colombia, Alberto Lleras Camargo: “As result of a chain of events within the Soviet Union which is not clear to me at this time, Mr. Khrushchev must have concluded before coming to Paris that progress at a Summit Meeting would be either undesirable or impossible. Accordingly, he embarked on a calculated campaign, even before it began, to insure the failure of the conference and to see to it that the onus for such failure would fall on the West, particularly the United States.”

The U.S. government and Eisenhower had missed the real story. Khrushchev had not wanted Paris to fail. He had shared the president’s hope that the summit would lead to a period of relaxed international tensions. Indeed, like Eisenhower, he had invested some political capital and personal prestige into the prospect of achieving better relations. Until May 15, two weeks after Powers had parachuted into Russia, the Soviet leader was reluctant to sacrifice all that he had done since December 1959 to achieve a détente.

Yet a détente was not realized. The year 1960 did not become a turning point in the Cold War. Was this all the fault of a single failed spy mission, as the KGB asserted to Powers? In a word, no. A review of what the United States and the Soviet Union planned to say to each other in Paris shows that a dramatic breakthrough would have been impossible on Berlin and unlikely on disarmament. The West was unwilling to give up its protection of West
Berlin, and Khrushchev’s views on that city had not evolved since November 1958. On the subject of disarmament, where his views were more flexible, the Russian appeared to be too afraid of U.S. power and intentions to concede to Eisenhower’s request for a verification regime, the on-site and overhead inspections, that Washington needed to overcome its deep mistrust of Moscow. Nevertheless, the dynamics of a summit where the Soviet Union would have been treated as an equal might have alleviated the fears of the mercurial Soviet leader. The aftermath of the U-2 incident, however, made this impossible to know.

What the U-2 affair did reveal was the enormous role of reputation in the superpower confrontation. Both leaders allowed matters of personal prestige to dictate their most important decisions in May 1960. At key moments, neither swallowed his pride when doing so would have allowed the embarrassing spectacle of a U.S. pilot in Lubyanka to fade into the background. This was not, however, the fault of grandeur or vanity. In a war fought more on a psychological plane than a conventional battlefield, where a superpower’s most potent defense involved deterring an enemy attack before it ever happened, the credibility of each leader carried enormous significance.

Two months after the failure in Paris, Khrushchev again reminded Washington of the importance of prestige. Although U-2 flights were suspended, the United States continued to send reconnaissance flights along the border with the Soviet Union. On July 1 the Soviet Air Force shot down an RB-47 spy plane that had taken off from a U.S. base in Great Britain on a mission over the Barents Sea. U.S. intelligence concluded that the plane never came closer than thirty miles from Soviet airspace. The Soviets argued otherwise. Four crew members died in the attack. The two surviving pilots were captured, and the Soviets refused to return them without a United Nations investigation. They joined Powers in Soviet custody.

Powers stood trial in August 1960 and was sentenced to three years in prison and an additional seven years of hard labor. He was exchanged for a Soviet spy, Vilyam Fischer, alias Rudolf Abel, in February 1962 and set free. Although the U.S. government negotiated for Powers’s freedom, he returned home under a cloud. The American people and Dulles’s replacement as CIA director, John McCone, believed that he had been disloyal under KGB interrogation. McCone set up a board of inquiry under Federal Judge E. Barrett Prettyman at the CIA to investigate Powers’s actions. The board determined that Powers had not been disloyal. The Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees also investigated his actions. But these investigations like the assessments of the Prettyman board were kept secret, thus denying Powers the opportunity not only to clear his name but to gain public praise.

The KGB’s records of Powers’s actions under interrogation remained closed until the publication of this book.

Despite the toll that the U-2 experience had taken on his respect for Eisenhower, Khrushchev did not intend to give up entirely on seeking détente with the West. A few weeks after the failure of the summit, he instructed Soviet representatives at Geneva to present the disarmament plan that he had intended to unveil in Paris. On June 7, 1960, the Soviet Union formally proposed that the destruction of all strategic missiles and bombers be the first step in general and complete disarmament. More important, the Soviets agreed that “all disarmament measures be carried out under strict international control from beginning to end.” Foreign inspectors would be allowed on Soviet soil but only after weapons had been destroyed.

Khrushchev also signaled that he continued to be patient about Berlin. He still assumed that it would take a meeting of the great leaders to reach an agreement. Unwilling to risk another Berlin crisis in the short term, he settled into a policy of marking time until Eisenhower’s replacement came into office in January 1961. There was little he expected to get out of the remaining months of the Eisenhower regime.

What Khrushchev did not anticipate was that events in three developing countries, in three different regions of the world, would make a six-month pause in the Soviet-American competition impossible.