

INTERVIEW WITH DREW PEARSON

Patty Cavin at 12:15 P.M. over WRC (Washington):

Miss Cavin interviewed columnist Drew Pearson, and the following was heard:

CAVIN: "Columnist Pearson and his partner Jack Anderson have the exclusive inside story of what really happened on May Day, 1960, when Lockheed pilot Francis Gary Powers took off in his sleek U-2 on what seemed to be an innocent weather flight. The account is published for the first time in the September issue of True, and seems to be backed up today by statements made last night by CIA Chief Allen Dulles. We'll have words with Drew Pearson first up on our show..."

"Page 34 of the September issue of the man's magazine True has a rather startling headline. It says, "Exclusive Inside Story of Pilot Powers and his Secret U-2 Spy Flight." The byline belongs to Drew Pearson and his partner Jack Anderson. We have Mr. Drew Pearson at our NBC microphone now, and, Drew, I was fascinated and somewhat appalled to read this account of what really happened for the first time, because it differs rather considerably from the reports that we have had since May Day on the Powers flight and what really did happen from the newspapers' standpoint. How come?"

PEARSON: "Well, I don't know, Patty, except that we had access to the Air Force records in this flight, and they very carefully monitored everything that Powers did, both at the time and then they had to reconstruct what happened afterwards, and, for instance, when his plane was displayed at Gorki Park in Moscow, the propeller blades were bent back, which wouldn't mean very much to you and me, but to the Air Force it meant a great deal. It meant his plane had stalled in the air at a flight--at an altitude actually of 70,000 feet, and the plane never crashed. It came down to a landing which didn't break up the plane too much."

CAVIN: "As you and Jack Anderson say in True magazine, to a belly-scraping landing."

PEARSON: "Your words are better than mine. I see that you've really read that article."

CAVIN: "Well, I couldn't put the article down, I must admit. Actually, Drew Pearson, let's go back and start at the findings that you and Jack Anderson began with. You traced the beginning of U-2's."

PEARSON: "Yes, we went back to approximately five years ago, perhaps a little bit before that. These flights have been taking place for a long time, not merely by the U-2 planes, but at first the United States various intelligence forces had attempted to get information by balloon, and had sent balloons at a very high altitude across Russia with photographic equipment."

"Well, this ran into trouble. Later we sent planes across with pilots who were Americans of other origins who could speak Russian very well, and then we switched finally to the U-2 plane after it was developed by Lockheed. We gave orders--there's no secret about any of this now--it's pretty well come out--we'd given orders that we had to have a U-2 plane--it wasn't called U-2 originally--which could fly at a



terrific altitude so that no Russian plane could knock it down.

"Now there's one thing I might point out, that our story differs from the testimony of Francis Gary Powers in one respect, and it's a rather important respect. We say in this article that he--his engine stalled at 70,000 feet. He says he was shot at and hit at 68,000 feet. I'm not quibbling about the 2,000 feet, that doesn't make much difference."

CAVIN: "It's the shot-at area that you are quibbling on."

PEARSON: "That's right. In other words, he testified that the Russians shot him at 68,000 feet. The information that the Air Force has, and it is definitely official information--no, I don't think--and we repeat it there--is that he was not shot at, that the Russians have no missile or plane that could hit or fly that high. And, when, as we recount in this article, at approximately 70,000 feet--it could have been 68,000--he turned on the emergency radio in his cockpit and shouted 'Flame-out', which means stalled--his engine had stalled. And this was picked up in Turkey by one of our monitoring stations. And at that point he coasted down, just as you would your car down a hill to start your engine again."

CAVIN: "You say in your article he spiraled down to 40,000 feet."

PEARSON: "That's right, in order to get his engine started. The atmosphere at 70,000 feet is so rarefied that you can't do anything with it, and down lower you can get started, but at that point he was shot. Now the question is, why is the testimony different from what we believe to be the facts?"

CAVIN: "Well, couldn't that possibly be the effect of the Russians' questioning and whatever they have done to Francis Gary Powers since he's been in their hands?"

PEARSON: "Yes, that is definitely my opinion. I think they treated him with great skill. I don't believe that he was brainwashed, as you and I usually think of the word brain-washed, but his defense attorney, who was an able defense attorney, undoubtedly got in there with him, and quite rightly told him that if he testified along certain lines, he would be dealt with more leniently.

"And the very important thing is that the Russians didn't want anyone to know that they had a plane--that an enemy or a potential enemy rather, or any foreign country is a better way to put it, could fly over their country and not be shot at, and I think that's the reason for his testimony."

CAVIN: "Well, now, Drew, you brought out a very interesting point also, which we have heard some facts on, and I'm interested in your interpretation. You said that May Day dawned perfectly, the weather on May Day was perfect, either for picnicking or for U-2 spying, and that the sky over Russia had to be cloudless to give the cameras a clear view, the upper atmosphere had to be dry so that the plane would not form giveaway (con trails) (?). If the weather had not been ideal, Powers would not have made that May Day flight, now would any other flights across Russia have been attempted until President Eisenhower would have completed his visit to Russia in mid-June--May 2--had already been set as the day for him--the last day--moratorium--"

PEARSON: "That's right."

CAVIN: "Now, you state that the weather was perfect, Mr. Powers took off, and at the same time in another part of the country another plane, as a decoy, was taking off, supposedly to lure the Russian radar and all the Russian trackers into thinking that this was Powers. Would you give us a few facts on that?"

PEARSON: "Well, the other plane took off from--I think it was Adana--at least it was along the Turkish border--and flew toward Pakistan from Iran, along the Iranian-Pakistan border. The reason for that, as you've indicated, was that the American bases in Turkey could communicate with Powers and the Russians would think--we hoped they would think we were communicating with the weather plane. The weather plane was not violating Russian territory; we fly those all the time.

"However, in this particular case, we did not know that the Russians were wise to what had happened, and they had sighted a previous plane about April 1--"

CAVIN: "A U-2?"

PEARSON: "A U-2."

CAVIN: "Which had also gone deep into the interior of Russia?"

PEARSON: "Which had gone deep into the interior of Russia, and they were completely aware that this plane on May 1 was coming, and they were waiting for it. They were waiting for it for a couple of reasons. One was the reason I just mentioned, that this other plane had come along on the first of April. The other was that they knew that we were worried about these very important bases of theirs in Central Russia, around the Caucasus, where they have their big missile bases, they are manufacturing some of their biggest rocket projects, and obviously that's what we need to see."

CAVIN: "And this all goes right into the story which Allen Dulles, the Director of CIA, made last night when he spoke before members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Mr. Dulles said that the Kremlin is jealously guarding the physical areas of the Soviet Union where it is building up in secrecy its formidable military weapons. Dulles declared that the Russians have repeatedly refused to accept a meaningful form of inspection, the best guarantee that disarmament can be honest, and Dulles then charged that Russia believes it is free to prepare in relative security for its spying on, their bases inside, and that this is our only method of getting pictures --aerial pictures--right?"

PEARSON: "That was the only method we had, and unfortunately the most tragic aftermath of all this is that we now don't know what is going on inside Russia, and we do know--we have pretty good reason to believe that they are transferring these bases to other parts of Russia, and even have some of their missiles on railroad cars so they can be transferred in a hurry."

CAVIN: "Drew, you made another point, when Mr. Powers was actually captured, some of the material that he had with him, including a hypodermic syringe with poison which killed a Russian dog in 30 seconds, was found, and there is a question in my mind after reading your article, written with Jack Anderson, as to why Francis Gary Powers didn't use the hypodermic needle, because, as you point out, anyone who works for Lockheed but reports to CIA, and one is in a position more of a pilot than a spy--didn't necessarily have to pledge that he would dispose of himself if he were caught, but he can't expect government backup if he is caught."





PEARSON: "Quite right. Well, the reason apparently that he didn't ~~was~~ that needle was that, in the first place, he had instructions that if he was caught, he should tell the truth. The reason for those instructions is very simple, that if a man is captured, well, with modern methods of brainwashing and so on, there isn't anything that you can do to prevent some kind of a story coming out, and usually it's a cock and bull story if you're under torture. Now, he probably didn't have time to use that needle and perhaps he never would have used it--I don't know.

"There have been some theories that somebody got to Powers--that the Russians got to him before he left Turkey--I don't believe that. The Air Force doesn't believe it. I think he's--was a guy who was doing his best, he was just an ordinary guy--"

CAVIN: "And he decided he wanted to live."

PEARSON: "And decided he wanted to live, right."

CAVIN: "Well, the final paragraph of the Pearson-Anderson article on what really happened to Francis Gary Powers on this fateful U-2 flight, concludes:

"Whatever the solution, the age of satellite spying will come, but will it come soon enough? The hope is that it will arrive before the U-2 pictures, which we already have in our possession, of Russia, are too far out of date. Otherwise, an even worse tragedy may result from our May Day disaster."

"Drew, that's food for thought, and we hope that everybody gets TRUE magazine this September and checks through the details which we haven't had time to cover. Congratulations on an awfully good story, and one final question, Mr. Pearson. Any truth to the rumor that you are currently working with NBC on a special film project?"

PEARSON: "Yes, I've been working very, very hard out of the city for that purpose, and doing a one-hour documentary as part of the public service program of NBC on the history and current work of the Quakers, and I hope and believe that it will be a wonderful film."