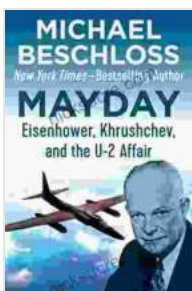


Mayday, Eisenhower, and Khrushchev: The Affair that Changed the Cold War

On May 1, 1960, a United States U-2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, triggering a political firestorm that threatened to unravel the fragile détente between the two superpowers. The incident, known as the "Mayday Affair," brought President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to the brink of war and cast a long shadow over the Cold War for years to come.

The U-2 Spy Plane

The U-2 was a high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft developed by the United States in the 1950s. At the time, it was the only aircraft capable of flying at altitudes high enough to avoid Soviet radar and air defenses. The U-2 was used to conduct surveillance missions over the Soviet Union, collecting vital intelligence on military installations, nuclear facilities, and other sensitive targets.



Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev, and the U-2 Affair

by Michael R. Beschloss

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 5430 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 459 pages
Lending	: Enabled



The Mayday Affair

On May 1, 1960, a U-2 spy plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers took off from a base in Pakistan and began a surveillance mission over the Soviet Union. The plane was detected by Soviet radar, and Soviet fighter jets were scrambled to intercept it. The U-2 pilot attempted to evade the interceptors, but was ultimately shot down over Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg).

The Soviet government announced the downing of the U-2 and claimed that it had been on a bombing mission. The United States initially denied the Soviet claims, but when the Soviets released photographs of the wreckage and the captured pilot, President Eisenhower was forced to admit that the U-2 had been on a spy mission.

Eisenhower's Response

President Eisenhower was furious at the Soviet government's actions and demanded the immediate release of the captured pilot. He also ordered a halt to all U-2 flights over the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's response was met with anger in the United States, where many people believed that the Soviets had humiliated the United States and violated its sovereignty.

Khrushchev's Response

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev seized on the Mayday Affair to denounce the United States as an aggressor. He accused the United States of violating Soviet airspace and threatened to retaliate if the United States did not cease its reconnaissance flights. Khrushchev also demanded that the captured pilot be tried as a spy.

The Paris Summit

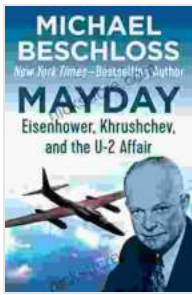
In the wake of the Mayday Affair, President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev were scheduled to meet at a summit in Paris in May 1960. The summit was intended to discuss a number of issues, including the U-2 incident and the nuclear arms race. However, the summit was canceled at the last minute after Khrushchev withdrew, citing the U-2 incident as the reason.

The Aftermath

The Mayday Affair had a profound impact on the Cold War. It shattered the fragile détente that had existed between the United States and the Soviet Union and led to a new escalation of tensions. The incident also raised serious questions about the United States' intelligence capabilities and the wisdom of its aggressive surveillance program.

The Mayday Affair continued to cast a shadow over the Cold War for years to come. It was not until 1962, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, that the United States and the Soviet Union finally reached a new agreement on arms control and the prevention of nuclear war.

The Mayday Affair was a pivotal event in the Cold War. It brought the two superpowers to the brink of war and shattered the fragile détente that had existed between them. The incident also raised serious questions about the United States' intelligence capabilities and the wisdom of its aggressive surveillance program. The Mayday Affair continued to cast a shadow over the Cold War for years to come, and it was not until 1962 that the United States and the Soviet Union finally reached a new agreement on arms control and the prevention of nuclear war.

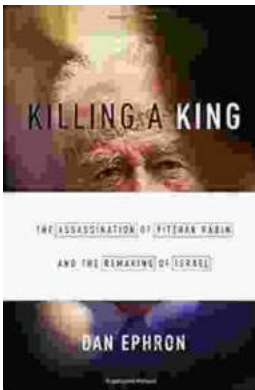


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