

*Diplomacy Shot Down: The U-2 Crisis and Eisenhower's Aborted Mission to Moscow, 1959-1960* by E. Bruce Geelhoed, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2020, 332 pp., \$34.95 (hardback), ISBN: 9780806164854

E. Bruce Geelhoed has written a fresh and interesting account of the U-2 spy-flight controversy of May 1960, and how it led to the collapse of the four-power Paris summit and the cancellation of President Dwight Eisenhower's planned visit to the Soviet Union later that year. The author points out that Eisenhower authorised the fateful U-2 mission, which was one in a series monitoring Soviet military preparations, under pressure from the CIA's Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell, who had feared that the Paris conference might lead to an agreement precluding further overflights. Previous U-2 incursions into the Soviet Union had taken place without incident, so there appeared to be little to worry about. Washington's dissimulation in response to Premier Nikita Khrushchev's announcement on 5 May that an American aircraft had been shot down over Soviet territory was ill-conceived, as Geelhoed makes clear. Some advisers recommended openness about the flight and justifying it on the basis that a strong intelligence capability was necessary to address the threat of surprise attack, but instead the President authorised Bissell's recommendation of a cover story that the U-2 was a weather plane that had drifted off course. Eisenhower only took personal responsibility for the flight on 11 May, four days after Khrushchev had announced that contrary to all expectations the aircraft had been recovered substantially intact and that the pilot – Francis Gary Powers - was alive and well. Overall, the administration responded with 'an uncharacteristic measure of hesitation and even confusion' (144) to the U-2 crisis, with Khrushchev putting Eisenhower very much on the back foot.

The President was responsible for a further slip-up in Paris on 15 May, the first day of what was intended to be a four-day conference, when instead of opening the talks himself in a tone of reason and moderation, he gave Khrushchev the chance to speak first. The Soviet leader condemned the American government vigorously for what he saw as its provocative and treacherous policies, bringing the summit to an end. Geelhoed speculates that Khrushchev's fury about the U-2 flight stemmed from concerns about hardliners in the Kremlin, who had opposed his friendly overtures to the United States in 1959-60 and his cuts to the Red Army. Moreover, in the post-Sputnik era of US 'missile gap' anxieties, the Soviet leader knew that the U-2 programme undermined his claims that his country was racing ahead in the production of nuclear missiles. There was also the sensitive memory for Khrushchev of German

overflights prior to attacking the Soviet Union in 1941, nor did it help that the pre-Paris conference U-2 mission had taken place on 1 May, International Workers' Day.

Geelhoed suggests that Khrushchev abandoned the Paris summit because he sought 'an excuse to deprive Eisenhower of his second visit to Russia' (177), which had been arranged for the summer. Khrushchev is said to have been worried that Eisenhower, who had received a rapturous reception on a visit to the Soviet Union fifteen years earlier for his military leadership, would be greeted with enthusiasm despite the U-2 controversy. Therefore Khrushchev's own standing would suffer. Geelhoed dedicates a chapter to exploring the American preparations, including draft speeches, for Eisenhower's trip to the Soviet Union. He maintains that the opportunity was missed for Eisenhower and Khrushchev to undertake 'serious discussions about a nuclear test ban' and to 'begin a process of moving the world away from nuclear weapons' (217). This is a counterfactual point given that the summit did not take place but is reasonable given what the documents reveal about the President's intentions. Furthermore, a successful Eisenhower-Khrushchev summit would have boosted the electoral chances of Richard Nixon as Eisenhower's 'heir apparent and successor to the presidency' (242). Instead, the next White House incumbent, John F. Kennedy, faced some of the most dangerous crises of the Cold War, with Khrushchev renewing the pressure over Berlin, and even stationing nuclear missiles in Cuba. The collapse of the Paris summit had opened a more dangerous phase in East-West relations.

The irony of Eisenhower's hopes in 1960 of easing the Cold War by personal diplomacy is that he had blocked Winston Churchill's pursuit of détente after Stalin's death seven years earlier. The President had doubted the sincerity of peace overtures from the Kremlin, which he thought were intended to disrupt progress towards West German rearmament. Like Churchill, Eisenhower experienced disappointment in his efforts to crown his historical reputation as a war leader with that of peacemaker as well. Geelhoed might have supplemented his research by consulting more British records, given the intimacy of Anglo-American diplomatic ties and the high hopes of the Harold Macmillan government for Paris. Nonetheless, *Diplomacy Shot Down* is an authoritative and very readable exploration of the American side of the U-2 affair and its impact on Eisenhower's relationship with Khrushchev. The book is an essential source for the Eisenhower presidency, American-Soviet relations, and intelligence-gathering in the Cold War.