

Letter from Moscow

# Trial within a Trial

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AMIGHTY power like the Soviet Union can be kind to Powers. This was one of the points made by the defence counsel, Mr Grinev. And when the judges retired for the final deliberations, the news broke through of the launching of the second cosmic ship. There was a ring of certainty about the announcement and most people had no doubt that the ship would return. The might of the Soviet Union was once more demonstrated. Many interesting details have been released of the historic experiment. Despite the cautious attitude of Soviet scientists, it is taken for granted that a man will go up to new heights before this year is out. His predecessors, the two dogs, have, in the meantime, charmed everyone by their vitality and modesty. It is not known whether they are keen on another flight. The general impression is that they like their Earth better than outer space. Vegetarians were delighted to hear that Strelka and Belka preferred something like halwa to ham on their return. The dogs underwent vigorous training—that explains their temporary appetite for the jelly.

Soviet scientists took pains to emphasise that it was a research, and not an espionage flight. They chuckled at the statement made by Eisenhower that the U S A had gone ahead in cosmic research. A call by an American scientist for cooperation in this field was published in a prominent place in the press. As for the ugly Americans, a cartoon depicts Strelka and Belka wondering at Herter—'his manners are strange,—he only barks!'

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For three days, approaches to the Central House of Trade Unions were cordoned off. Curious men and women waited in silence beyond the cordon. Were they hostile to Powers? Most foreign visitors were impressed by the total lack of hostility, both inside and outside the trial hall. The Russians may hate a system, but they seldom confuse ordinary folk with the ruling class. That is why

they are so generous to all, including Germans. Even when the Soviet Prosecutor-General, Rudenko, declared that men like Powers, trained in the conditions of the cold war, deserved exemplary punishment—such men could drop an atom bomb with the same ease as he 'switched on and off' the special equipment on, board the U-2—he did not seem that serious. He had been straight forward and humane in his cross-examination, at times he had not pressed his points. After all, the man in the dock had confessed; so had his bosses in a way. It was the duty of the Prosecutor-General to go beyond the crime and point out the politics that led to it. The complicity of certain States besides America was established. The utter danger of spy flights in the nuclear age became clear to all who sat through the trial. Rudenko spoke of accomplices of the U S A—Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Norway; he called Adenauer 'a follower of Hitler'. He attacked the U S A for 'perfidy, provocation and brinkmanship'. During his 90-minute speech, the foreign journalists were rather idle with their pens—the contents of the speech were not unexpected.

The defence counsel made a brilliant job of his unpleasant task (Rudenko was applauded by visitors, but Grinev met with silence when he ended his short speech). His arguments were sure to move the Russians; Powers comes of a working-class family; his father employs no hired labour in his shoe-repair shop and does not run his small farm for profit. The uncertainties of the American employment situation had forced Powers to take a job in the Air Force. In the USA, it is hard for people to resist that 'yellow devil'—the dollar. Powers carried out orders without being aware of the consequences. But he had never quite liked his job and would not have renewed his contract, if he could land a better one. Awareness came after May 1 and with it came repentance. Perhaps some 'internal change' began to take place when he came in contact with the Soviet people. Maybe that was why he made a frank confession, said Grinev.

Rudenko attacked U S politics; Grinev the American way of living.

Powers left no doubt about his sincerity. There was not the slightest trace of brain-washing in the manner and content of his answers and the short statement he made at the end, before the judgment. At times he looked like one groping towards truth. When he thanked the four witnesses who had first met him after the descent, he must have softened quite a few Russian hearts.

Powers had confessed his guilt. Why, then, this lengthy trial? Why flog a dead horse? Experts explain that, according to an amendment in the Soviet juridical procedure in 1958, there should be a full trial even after admission of guilt to see that confession is not forced by torture or induced by promises of a light sentence or a let-off.

It is reported that Powers's father, sister and wife have taken on assignments for an American journal. The Soviet people were kind to them. They expect them to be fair in their turn.

During and after the trial, there was frequent reference "to the instigators and organisers of the crime". It was a trial within a trial. Men and women were reminded of the principal accused who were absent.

About 140 foreign journalists attended the trial. Many jurists had been invited. India was represented by one. Another, an elderly lawyer of repute, could not come. On the last day, the Indian Ambassador was present with his family. The presence of the Powers family lent a dramatically human touch. Did the young Mrs Powers cry out when the sentence was announced? No one seemed to have heard that cry, except one journalist.

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August 27

The demand of the West German Generals for nuclear army has led to a storm of indignation in the Soviet Union. It looks as if the West Berlin question will be taken up earlier than expected.