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# TV Comes of Age With 'U-2 Affair'

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EVERY NOW AND THEN one sees evidence that television is coming of age and realizing its potential as a medium of public information and general enlightenment.

One such occasion was the presentation by NBC Tuesday night of a one-hour documentary special entitled "The U-2 Affair," the first in a series designed to examine in depth some developments which may threaten the future of the United States. If "The U-2 Affair" is any criterion, the series is off to a powerful start.



CHET HUNTLEY

Proceeding, apparently, on the correct assumption that the U-2 flight and its subsequent handling have created much confusion in the mind of the man on the street, the film performs the valuable chore of not only putting the whole affair in chronological order, but also interpreting the significance of the flight, its background, its place in our present-day system of espionage, and its unfortunate results.

In doing so it also makes it pretty clear to the man in the street who were the bad guys. There were no good guys, unless it might be the several newspaper men in bureaus here and abroad who saw more in the original story than just another downed flyer, and who tried to get the facts.

As for the bad guys, it would be hard to tell who came off worst, President Eisenhower, the State Department, or Press Secretary James Hagerty. They stood indicted, in that order, of ignorance, confusion and expediency. The only lesson the country learned, smirked Hagerty in summing up, was, "don't get caught," a point of view with which the average viewer, after having been shown the whole sorry mess, is not likely to agree.

The U-2, many viewers learned for the first time, is a unique craft which has been kept pretty much under wraps. It is known as "the black lady of espionage" and is capable of half gliding and half flying for a distance of 4000 miles. It is also known, viewers learned, that the flight had been expected and tracked by the Russians and that it was forced down by mechanical failure and not shot down.

Confusion began when the State Department, in answer to inquiries, issued what is known as a "cover" story. It said the Russians may have shot down an unarmed United States research plane rather than a military craft. The story, as Brig. Gen. Thomas R. Phillips, Post-Dispatch military analyst and a guest on the show, pointed out, was based on all counts, particularly its failure to consider the possibility that the pilot might be alive and the plane intact.

Even after Khrushchev had sounded off, the State Department tried to cover up. Hagerty told newsmen the State Department was ready to tell all, but State had little to say in the meantime, as Narrator Chet Huntley pointed out, "Eisenhower played a round of golf."

Even after Khrushchev had revealed the pilot was alive and had confessed, the State Department was denying any attempt to violate Russian air space. After a week had gone by, Hagerty promised newsmen a story. The story, newsmen learned when they gathered, was about nuclear testing. So it went.

Finally there was the sad attempt to justify not only the lie about the flight, but the right to make such flights.

By just presenting things as they happened, with film clips, interviews and narration, the program made it quite clear that the whole thing was a very sorry mess indeed.

But Hagerty only smiled and said it taught us not to get caught. Secretary of State Herter said it taught us not to have accidents. But any viewer of normal intelligence knew by the end of the program that you couldn't brush it off so lightly, and that, as Huntley said, with the world the way it is today, we can't afford many more such incidents. We can well afford more such television shows.

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