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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:29,880

Revealed in upcoming episodes of this program are the contents of a recently

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00:00:29,880 --> 00:00:36,880

unearthed repository classified by the secret government, the Phenomenon Archives.

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00:00:59,880 --> 00:01:29,480

The recently unearthed Phenomenon Archives revealed that Yuri Gagarin was not the first

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00:01:29,480 --> 00:01:37,000

man in space. I'm Dean Stockwell, your host. Join me on a visit with General Vladimir Ilyushin,

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:43,760

the unsung hero of the First Man Soviet space mission.

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00:01:43,760 --> 00:01:51,520

On April 12, 1961, the Soviet Union reports the successful launch, orbit, and reentry

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00:01:51,520 --> 00:01:59,520

of the First Man in space, cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

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00:01:59,520 --> 00:02:05,160

Celebration erupts worldwide over Gagarin's single orbit and the Soviet Union's land-arch

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00:02:05,160 --> 00:02:12,880

achievement. Gagarin goes on to become one of the greatest heroes in the history of

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00:02:12,880 --> 00:02:19,920

humanity. With the collapse of communism and the rise of freedom and democracy in the Russian

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00:02:19,920 --> 00:02:25,040

Federation, recent access to documents in the Kremlin archives revealed the shocking

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00:02:25,040 --> 00:02:32,880

truth about a story intended to remain buried forever.

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00:02:32,880 --> 00:02:40,200

Yuri Gagarin, the symbol and icon of triumphant communism known the world over, was not the

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00:02:40,200 --> 00:02:41,920

First Man in space.

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00:02:50,920 --> 00:02:55,800

Suspensions were high from the day of the Gagarin launch. The Soviets had never announced an

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00:02:55,800 --> 00:03:01,400

event of such magnitude until it was a done deal. Why did they break their own rule and

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00:03:01,400 --> 00:03:08,660

give a play-by-play of the flight? Indeed, a rocket is launched on April 16, 1961, completely

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00:03:08,660 --> 00:03:13,320

controlled from the ground as were all of the Soviet manned missions. Gagarin is filmed

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00:03:13,320 --> 00:03:19,040

boarding the capsule, but when the propaganda cameras stop rolling, does Gagarin stay on

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00:03:19,040 --> 00:03:27,520

board as the Russians claim or does something entirely different occur?

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00:03:27,520 --> 00:03:34,500

On October 4, 1957, in a feat most global experts think impossible, the Soviet Union

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00:03:34,500 --> 00:03:40,880

ushers in the space age, when it becomes the first nation to put a satellite in space,

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00:03:40,880 --> 00:03:48,080

the groundbreaking orbiter Sputnik. People around the world are shocked and dismayed,

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00:03:48,120 --> 00:03:53,320

realizing that the Soviet payload could just as easily have been a nuclear warhead capable

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00:03:53,320 --> 00:04:03,320

of being delivered anywhere on the planet. This event drastically transforms the political,

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00:04:03,320 --> 00:04:08,040

military and psychological climate around the world and serves to heighten the division

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00:04:08,040 --> 00:04:17,440

between democracy and communism. For the first time, space is introduced as the new theater

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00:04:17,560 --> 00:04:23,360

of competition during the Cold War.

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00:04:23,360 --> 00:04:32,040

After Sputnik was launched, Soviet press published very modest reports of some small objects

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00:04:32,040 --> 00:04:41,540

was delivered to the orbit, but government clearly was surprised by tremendous outpouring

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00:04:41,660 --> 00:04:50,660

of emotions by international media. And finally they thought, look, this little toy can give

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00:04:50,660 --> 00:04:59,700

in our hands a very important political and propaganda instrument. It was used as propaganda

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00:04:59,700 --> 00:05:09,420

as a vehicle to tell that socialist system is superior.

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00:05:09,420 --> 00:05:14,980

By the late 1950s, it is clear to both the United States and the Soviet Union that the

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00:05:14,980 --> 00:05:23,580

next space challenge is to send a man into orbit. On December 17, 1958, the United States

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00:05:23,580 --> 00:05:28,980

creates NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which is given full

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00:05:28,980 --> 00:05:38,980

authority to oversee all manned and unmanned American space activities.

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00:05:39,540 --> 00:05:46,260

President Eisenhower started NASA and wanted to deal with the exploration of space as a

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00:05:46,260 --> 00:05:52,300

civilian activity. There, of course, was already a large activity in the services, primarily

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00:05:52,300 --> 00:06:00,180

the Air Force, where they had been developing the large rockets that eventually became ICBMs,

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00:06:00,180 --> 00:06:07,300

and they were beginning to think about deploying satellites and so on. But the manned exploration

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00:06:07,300 --> 00:06:13,620

of space was assigned to NASA as a civilian space agency, and it had basically a civilian

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00:06:13,620 --> 00:06:20,460

character from the beginning. Several highly trained military jet test

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00:06:20,460 --> 00:06:27,140

pilots are chosen by both nations to defend the honor of their respective countries. The

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00:06:27,140 --> 00:06:35,780

Americans name their space travelers astronauts and encourage abundant publicity by the press.

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00:06:35,780 --> 00:06:42,820

In sharp contrast, the Soviet space program remains a highly secretive branch of the military.

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00:06:42,820 --> 00:06:48,340

Test pilots become known as cosmonauts. Everything about them and their work is classified top

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00:06:48,340 --> 00:06:55,260

secret, including the number of men chosen and their names. Even the cosmonauts' families

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00:06:55,260 --> 00:07:01,540

are kept in the dark as to their loved ones' activities and missions.

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00:07:01,540 --> 00:07:10,420

This was so secret. I understood that I cannot explain it to you. It is this part with which

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00:07:10,420 --> 00:07:18,420

you can only understand if you live there. I even can explain it to my children now,

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00:07:18,420 --> 00:07:24,260

why it was secret, because it has no explanation. Even though nothing, it was part of this life.

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00:07:24,260 --> 00:07:31,180

You cannot tell this, you cannot tell this. The same like it was dangerous to meet any

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00:07:31,180 --> 00:07:38,060

foreigners. The rules vary in the Russian space program

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00:07:38,060 --> 00:07:46,540

that no one who didn't fly before would be known. Names were kept under secret.

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00:07:46,540 --> 00:07:51,340

Facts only recently uncovered in documents stored in the Kremlin archives reveal the

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00:07:51,420 --> 00:07:57,580

extent to which the government interfered with the Soviet space agency. In October 1960,

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00:07:57,580 --> 00:08:02,700

a huge new booster rocket appears to have malfunctioned at the time of launch. Instead

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00:08:02,700 --> 00:08:10,140

of taking off, it sits on the launch pad. Ignoring all warnings and overriding safety precautions,

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00:08:10,140 --> 00:08:15,460

the Kremlin orders the launch director and engineers to fix the problem immediately in

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00:08:15,500 --> 00:08:18,300

order to get the rocket off the ground that same day.

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00:08:18,300 --> 00:08:26,020

Marshall Medellian, who was the head of rocket strategic forces, personally sitting in the chair

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00:08:26,020 --> 00:08:33,580

next to the rocket was in preparation before the launch. He demanded that this chair should be

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00:08:33,580 --> 00:08:42,020

brought next to the rocket and it was completely against all the safety regulations. And everybody

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00:08:42,020 --> 00:08:49,020

around knew that this is against the safety regulations. But everyone thought, look, if I

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00:08:49,020 --> 00:08:59,420

wouldn't get placed next to the big boss, I might be fired next day from my job.

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00:08:59,420 --> 00:09:09,340

With nearly 200 men inspecting the rocket, including launch director Medellian, a huge ball of fire

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00:09:09,460 --> 00:09:17,740

suddenly erupts and instantly vaporizes everyone in the vicinity. Amazingly, this historic tragedy

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00:09:17,740 --> 00:09:23,340

is not officially confirmed by the Soviet government until almost 30 years later.

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00:09:23,340 --> 00:09:34,500

I don't think the high officials in government, including Russia, could be considered as directly

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00:09:34,540 --> 00:09:43,420

responsible for this type of failure. There was a pressure from government, mostly perceived

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00:09:43,420 --> 00:09:52,300

pressure. Everyone wanted to get promotion, new decorations. And this is why everyone worked

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00:09:52,300 --> 00:10:01,500

very hard. But safety regulations were extremely strict and only such high officials, like highest

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00:10:01,500 --> 00:10:07,500

military commander, could personally violate the safety precaution.

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00:10:10,500 --> 00:10:15,500

Other Kremlin documents indicate that as many as seven cosmonauts are killed in secret space flight

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00:10:15,500 --> 00:10:25,500

attempts and training accidents prior to Gagarin's historic flight. Cosmonauts Lodovsky, Shiborin,

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00:10:25,500 --> 00:10:32,500

Mitkov, Dolgov, Balakenev, Kachur and Grachev are never honored for their pioneering work

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00:10:32,500 --> 00:10:39,500

or for giving their lives in an attempt to reach their elusive goal of space. Instead,

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00:10:39,500 --> 00:10:44,500

their names remain deeply hidden in the Kremlin archives on a secret list of cosmonauts who

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00:10:44,500 --> 00:10:50,500

perish tragically in the many rocket accidents that occurred during the formative years of the Russian

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00:10:50,500 --> 00:10:51,500

space program.

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00:10:56,500 --> 00:11:02,500

Space missions in the early days were anything but perfect science, especially when it came to landing.

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00:11:02,500 --> 00:11:07,500

Mission control could approximate, but sometimes it would take hours to find the capsule. NASA

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00:11:07,500 --> 00:11:14,500

astronauts came down over water, cosmonauts over land. In the early days, the Russians had to jump out

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00:11:14,500 --> 00:11:20,500

and parachute to safety. On that day in 61, several eyewitnesses, farmers, report that Gagarin's

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00:11:20,500 --> 00:11:26,500

shoot appeared over the field where they were working. They run to him, hoping to shake the hand of the man

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00:11:26,500 --> 00:11:33,500

who's just made history. Before they can get there, a helicopter swoops down and takes him away.

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00:11:33,500 --> 00:11:41,500

We can tell that the Russians were trying to be secretive, that they were covering up something

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00:11:41,500 --> 00:11:49,500

and not being totally truthful. We have photographs where we have two versions of the same photographs.

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00:11:50,500 --> 00:11:54,500

Where we believe a cosmonaut in training has been airbrushed away.

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00:12:02,500 --> 00:12:08,500

These guys, and they were all guys, felt that they were doing something for the country and that that was the

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00:12:08,500 --> 00:12:13,500

price that they paid, which was never being acknowledged and never really having an opportunity to

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00:12:13,500 --> 00:12:21,500

bask in that. That was the point at which a lot of these guys became increasingly clear that they had been

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00:12:21,500 --> 00:12:29,500

shafted and they became angry. There was a lot of anger, but they couldn't do anything. There was no place to go.

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00:12:29,500 --> 00:12:35,500

There was no free press. There were only family members to hear their stories and after a while, they had told

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00:12:35,500 --> 00:12:38,500

those stories. What more could they do?

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00:12:38,500 --> 00:12:47,500

Between 1959 and 1961, the Soviet Union prohibits the release of any facts negatively reflecting on the

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00:12:47,500 --> 00:12:53,500

space agency, which itself is shrouded in top military secrecy.

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00:12:53,500 --> 00:12:59,500

One of the things that most Americans don't understand is the secrecy that went into the Soviet program.

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00:12:59,500 --> 00:13:04,500

That it was in fact a military program. Nothing was announced ahead of time.

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00:13:04,500 --> 00:13:12,500

Nothing, no details were given and only if it was successful did it show up in the public press.

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00:13:12,500 --> 00:13:17,500

The Soviets undoubtedly put tremendous effort into secrecy.

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00:13:18,500 --> 00:13:25,500

Khrushchev is not concerned for any individual cosmonaut, but for the status of his country in the space race

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00:13:25,500 --> 00:13:32,500

and in the theater of world opinion. His fanaticism and fear of the United States during the height of the Cold War

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00:13:32,500 --> 00:13:34,500

borders on paranoia.

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00:13:34,500 --> 00:13:43,500

When you are talking about my father and how he threatened Americans, it's a very different explanation

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00:13:43,500 --> 00:13:50,500

and very different angles. One of them, he really wanted to threaten you for death.

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00:13:50,500 --> 00:14:00,500

It was used here, the threat, because it was part of his conversation that the Soviet system economically more effective

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00:14:00,500 --> 00:14:11,500

than capitalists and then he told, if you'll not take our place, then we will bury you, which means socialists will

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00:14:11,500 --> 00:14:13,500

bury capitalists.

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00:14:13,500 --> 00:14:21,500

No, all my life I woke up with some rough voice in the morning, told, I'm burying you.

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00:14:24,500 --> 00:14:34,500

So we had an environment of competition in space that was really part of a larger competition that was mostly military and

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00:14:34,500 --> 00:14:44,500

political in nature and it was a general sense of threat and unease and uncertainty about where this whole thing was going to go.

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00:14:44,500 --> 00:14:55,500

People had images of bombs and vehicles of various kinds flying overhead all the time. It was a genuine threat to the attitudes

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00:14:55,500 --> 00:15:00,500

and psyche of people in our country and I'm sure people in the Soviet Union at the time.

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00:15:05,500 --> 00:15:19,500

Duck and cover, that was the motto. In case of a nuclear blast, school kids were told to climb under their desks to protect themselves.

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00:15:19,500 --> 00:15:28,500

It was pretty wacky. The sky wasn't safe anymore, not after Sputnik. Khrushchev knew he had America on the run and if he could deliver

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00:15:28,500 --> 00:15:35,500

the planet to orbit before the US, well, didn't that mean that they had won? Didn't that mean that the Soviet system was better?

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00:15:35,500 --> 00:15:40,500

As I said, it was a wacky time.

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00:15:42,500 --> 00:15:50,500

Khrushchev becomes obsessed with the idea of being the first to successfully launch a man into space. He orders the head of the Soviet

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00:15:50,500 --> 00:16:02,500

space program as curl off to make it happen no matter what the cost. Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Ilyushin, one of the Soviet Union's most popular

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00:16:02,500 --> 00:16:12,500

and experienced military test pilots, is perhaps the most likely candidate for the job. With dozens of speed records to his credit, he also holds the

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00:16:12,500 --> 00:16:17,500

world altitude record of nearly 30 kilometers set in 1959.

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00:16:18,500 --> 00:16:29,500

He tested some of the most sophisticated designs the Russians had, including many Sukhoi designs and a design very similar to our B-70 aircraft.

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00:16:30,500 --> 00:16:38,500

He was a hot rod pilot. He was essentially the equivalent of our Chuck Yeager.

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00:16:39,500 --> 00:16:52,500

Ilyushin comes from, by far, the most distinguished military and engineering family in the Soviet Union. His father Sergei is a Soviet hero of unparalleled importance.

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00:16:52,500 --> 00:17:02,500

Sergei's design and construction of fighter and bomber planes contribute to the Soviet victory over an invading German army during World War II.

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00:17:03,500 --> 00:17:23,500

Sergei Ilyushin, the designer, was very much involved in World War II fighter planes. The Soviets, the battle of Stalingrad, the IL-2 Sturmovich was probably the most famous of all the Russian aircraft being a ground attack aircraft.

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00:17:23,500 --> 00:17:30,500

So this gave him huge stature under Stalin and of course Khrushchev, I think, was over.

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00:17:33,500 --> 00:17:40,500

Sergei Ilyushin is a member of the Inner Sanctum of Power, being a distinguished deputy leader of the Supreme Soviet.

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00:17:41,500 --> 00:17:53,500

His sphere of influence ascends to the head of the Soviet space program, S. Korolov, who himself works under Ilyushin as a junior aircraft designer prior to World War II.

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00:17:54,500 --> 00:18:01,500

The relationship between the famous designer father and the test pilot son is strained.

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00:18:01,500 --> 00:18:13,500

The willful son, ever mindful of being cast in his father's shadow, sets to free himself and resists being groomed to succeed the elder Ilyushin in the family business.

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00:18:14,500 --> 00:18:25,500

After World War II, the elder Ilyushin correctly envisions the future of aircraft manufacturing as being diverted from military to passenger craft.

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00:18:26,500 --> 00:18:36,500

However, consistent with his jet pilot image, Vladimir stubbornly rejects this pathway, preferring to remain a test pilot and designer of military jets.

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00:18:36,500 --> 00:18:45,500

In a final act of defiance, Vladimir joins the Sukhoi Company in 1952, his father's competitor.

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00:18:46,500 --> 00:19:00,500

In late 1960, Vladimir Ilyushin is awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest possible military award for his altitude records and overall service to the country.

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00:19:00,500 --> 00:19:08,500

This honor, equivalent to the Congressional Medal in the United States, is bestowed upon only a select few.

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00:19:09,500 --> 00:19:17,500

Throughout the 1950s, the relationship between elder and younger Ilyushin is one of anger and distrust.

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00:19:17,500 --> 00:19:24,500

This, however, culminates in a relationship of mutual pride, respect and understanding.

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00:19:27,500 --> 00:19:32,500

Initially, the young Ilyushin snubs the thought of flying in space.

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00:19:33,500 --> 00:19:48,500

The space capsule, operated exclusively by mission control engineers via remote control, with no hands-on cosmonaut interaction, seems more a mission fit for dogs and lab rats than the best test pilot of the era.

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00:19:48,500 --> 00:19:56,500

In spite of this handicap, literally all Ilyushin's best-flying comrades join the cosmonaut corps.

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00:20:02,500 --> 00:20:15,500

Riding the wave of his Medal of Honor and encouraged by the choices of his most trusted peers, Ilyushin changes his mind and begins actively pursuing the goal of becoming the first man in space.

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00:20:19,500 --> 00:20:31,500

Ilyushin views space as his personal opportunity to step out from under the shadow of his larger-than-life father and to become a distinguished hero in his own right.

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00:20:33,500 --> 00:20:47,500

With his own professional accomplishments added to his family's tremendous political influence, Lieutenant Colonel Ilyushin is ultimately given the much coveted opportunity to become the first man in space.

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00:20:47,500 --> 00:21:08,500

It was therefore, in my view, no accident that Ilyushin would have been picked as the man for the job. It was an obvious choice. He was the right age, he had the right training, he had the name. It would have been perfect had it worked.

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00:21:09,500 --> 00:21:27,500

When producers Haimov and Stillman first contacted Vladimir Ilyushin about his story, the man broke down in tears. Imagine the relief he must have felt, letting go of a 40-year-old lie.

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00:21:28,500 --> 00:21:45,500

Getting the opportunity to be first hadn't come easy to Vladimir, despite his father's prestige and his own jet pilot accomplishments. The trip into space would require a good deal of training and preparation. He had gotten a late start. Compared to his comrades, he was way behind.

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00:21:46,500 --> 00:22:05,500

Because his fellow test pilots are well into their second year of spaceflight preparation, Ilyushin must doggedly engage in several months of intense catch-up, training to put him on equal footing and prepare him for his life's calling. The entire process is shrouded in secrecy.

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00:22:06,500 --> 00:22:31,500

If somebody will begin to think that we have to publish, that we are planning to go to send the Cosmonaut to the space, then publish this name. First of all, it will be even very difficult to imagine, even to Karalov and these people, because everything was so secret.

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00:22:31,500 --> 00:22:49,500

Then after that it was impossible to receive the permission, because the way of life was different and the answer would be very simple. Why you have to do this before you reach your goal? For what reason?

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00:22:50,500 --> 00:23:03,500

According to declassified documents, Ilyushin is put into his capsule named Roshia and launched in top military secrecy on Friday, April 7th, 1961.

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00:23:04,500 --> 00:23:22,500

At the time, the CIA and other military intelligence organizations neither confirm or deny the detection of the launch or the flight. Presumably, they do not want to tip their hand as to the extent of their intelligence capabilities in detecting Soviet launches and orbits.

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00:23:23,500 --> 00:23:44,500

Sources very close to Ilyushin report that during the flight, Ilyushin evidently loses consciousness sometime after the third orbit and before reentry, causing mission control to lose

contact with the capsule.

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00:23:45,500 --> 00:23:59,500

We know now from an article in Aviation Week and Space Technology that in fact the Soviets had attempted three orbit flights in trying to recover a capsule. This was in 1959.

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00:23:59,500 --> 00:24:12,500

So that's been one of the problems with the Ilyushin story all along, is that the three orbit was an American program where a single orbit was the Soviet, but now we know that's not necessarily true.

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00:24:12,500 --> 00:24:32,500

So I believe what happened was that Vladimir Ilyushin was put into orbit, something went wrong aboard the spacecraft, whether the guidance system or whatever, and that for several hours he was subjected to conditions that were not conducive to his health.

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00:24:32,500 --> 00:24:45,500

At the time, the Soviets had not yet perfected proper reentry and landing capabilities. Therefore, cosmonauts were expected to eject at 10 to 20,000 feet and parachute to safety.

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00:24:45,500 --> 00:25:00,500

Recently uncovered Kremlin documents revealed that Ilyushin was unable to eject and was forced to make a hard landing in the capsule. Amazing though it may seem, he survived, badly hurt, but alive.

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00:25:00,500 --> 00:25:10,500

He made a successful recovery, but he was hurt. Either physically or emotionally, he was not presentable to the public.

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00:25:10,500 --> 00:25:19,500

At the time, Vladimir Ilyushin's flight, there were several reports internationally. One was in England from a reporter that was in Moscow at the time.

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00:25:19,500 --> 00:25:35,500

There was one of a French reporter that was there on that day, one from Bulgaria, various American Air Force people made comments that an attempt was made. And those sources were independent.

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00:25:35,500 --> 00:25:41,500

It wasn't the case of one source and then another by picking it up, they were separate sources.

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00:25:41,500 --> 00:25:54,500

The government controlled Soviet press refuses to acknowledge the foreign reports and later forcefully denies the story altogether by way of several conflicting and contradictory excuses.

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00:25:54,500 --> 00:26:01,500

The entire Soviet government is in great confusion and turmoil surrounding only partially successful event.

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00:26:01,500 --> 00:26:12,500

Marxist-Leninist economics and Marxist-Leninist politics prided itself on being a scientific objective analysis of human and natural law.

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00:26:12,500 --> 00:26:21,500

And if you are really good at your Marxist-Leninist theory, then nothing in the real world should be less than perfect.

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00:26:21,500 --> 00:26:29,500

So it was a great embarrassment not only to disclose this fact externally, but to have to admit it internally in the halls of power.

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00:26:31,500 --> 00:26:43,500

All the failures were known only to a narrow circle and there was kind of oral history, you could learn from France what happened at the launch.

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00:26:43,500 --> 00:26:52,500

But it was amazing that now in retrospect we did not have more failures than...

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00:26:52,500 --> 00:27:02,500

I think the way government tried to hide the failures was really detrimental for the program.

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00:27:02,500 --> 00:27:09,500

I think they were put in a situation then that they didn't have somebody they could present to the public.

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00:27:09,500 --> 00:27:25,500

And here Khrushchev had been using the space program as one of his big propaganda hammers and to have this kind of failure was intolerable.

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00:27:25,500 --> 00:27:33,500

So when Khrushchev came to power, he made our society much less closed.

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00:27:33,500 --> 00:27:41,500

But before everything was secret. Now still many things remain secret which had no explanation.

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00:27:41,500 --> 00:27:54,500

Because for example, they told why we have to talk to all the world about our failures, it will not help us.

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00:27:56,500 --> 00:28:08,500

The regime's whole purpose in being was to preserve itself and to preserve the ideological basis that justified the Communist Party's control of Soviet society.

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00:28:08,500 --> 00:28:18,500

And if you're sitting in a meeting and you're told that the most significant public personality in science has been injured

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00:28:18,500 --> 00:28:33,500

and the most significant technology that we will win the Cold War will fail, you have no choice but to cover it up and move on to the next potential victim.

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00:28:39,500 --> 00:28:49,500

The story initially released by the Soviets claims that illusion is recuperating in a Moscow hospital from a car accident that occurred the month before.

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00:28:49,500 --> 00:28:57,500

The next report claims that illusion suffered injuries in a car accident that occurred two years prior and was in a coma.

183

00:28:57,500 --> 00:29:01,500

So could not possibly have had anything to do with the space program.

184

00:29:01,500 --> 00:29:11,500

This even though photos were taken of illusion over that two year period. Numerous contradictions

of this nature added the skepticism of western journalists.

185

00:29:11,500 --> 00:29:20,500

Within weeks, the Soviet government reports that illusion is being transported to a remote rehabilitation hospital in China.

186

00:29:20,500 --> 00:29:25,500

There, he is said to have remained for a year after the suspected flight.

187

00:29:26,500 --> 00:29:34,500

There were two reports on Vladimir illusion being injured and being sent to China.

188

00:29:34,500 --> 00:29:40,500

One of them had him in a Peking hospital, one of them had him in a Hangzhou hospital.

189

00:29:40,500 --> 00:29:50,500

It's very doubtful to me that somebody in a car accident in the Soviet Union, especially the son of a famous aviation designer

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00:29:50,500 --> 00:30:00,500

and somebody himself, a test pilot, a military test pilot would be sent to a Chinese hospital for

recuperation.

191

00:30:06,500 --> 00:30:11,500

Any China connection in hindsight seems highly unlikely.

192

00:30:11,500 --> 00:30:19,500

But if indeed illusion was sent to China by the Soviet government, it was most probably to keep him beyond the reach of western reporters.

193

00:30:19,500 --> 00:30:44,500

In a highly suspect coincidence, on Saturday, April 8, 1961, the very day after illusion's ill-fated mission, an internal meeting is quickly scheduled by Kurolyov for various members of the military and government for the purpose of introducing the next first man in space, Lieutenant Yuri Gagarin.

194

00:30:50,500 --> 00:31:01,500

In keeping true to the overall secrecy of the Soviet space program, the details in film of this meeting are not made public for several years after Gagarin's flight.

195

00:31:02,500 --> 00:31:17,500

After Khrushchev sees that illusion isn't going to be the propaganda hammer he wants, he quickly moves on to the next victim. It's easily justified.

196

00:31:17,500 --> 00:31:27,500

They delivered a man into space and brought him back. The fact that he passed out is a formality. Russia has beaten America and they must tell the world.

197

00:31:28,500 --> 00:31:38,500

Gagarin's appointed in a special meeting of the Soviet leadership on a Saturday, the day after illusion's flight. So illusion is launched on April 7.

198

00:31:38,500 --> 00:31:47,500

Gagarin's appointed on April 8 and then four days after that, his rocket was launched. But was he in it?

199

00:31:48,500 --> 00:32:03,500

By comparison with illusion, Gagarin is a novice test pilot, still wet behind the ears. He does not have a single noteworthy accomplishment or record to his credit.

200

00:32:03,500 --> 00:32:10,500

He is, however, attractive, young, and a committed member of the Communist Party.

201

00:32:18,500 --> 00:32:25,500

The Soviet Union is the first to launch a new nuclear missile, the Soviet Union's first nuclear missile.

202

00:32:25,500 --> 00:32:32,500

The Soviet Union is the first to launch a new nuclear missile, the Soviet Union's first nuclear missile.

203

00:32:32,500 --> 00:32:38,500

The Soviet Union is the first to launch a new nuclear missile, the Soviet Union's first nuclear missile.

204

00:32:39,500 --> 00:32:54,500

Five days after the illusion flight that is never officially reported by the Soviet press, the successful Gagarin launch is reported.

205

00:32:55,500 --> 00:33:07,500

In the Soviet Union of the early 60s, it was very easy for people to accept this because their lives were essentially cut off from the rest of the world.

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00:33:07,500 --> 00:33:14,500

There was no satellite television, there was no radio from BBC that was easy to get.

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00:33:14,500 --> 00:33:19,500

So the world outside the Soviet borders didn't really exist very much.

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00:33:20,500 --> 00:33:28,500

So that's why when they told the story that the illusion didn't really do what we now think he may have done,

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00:33:28,500 --> 00:33:38,500

or that Gagarin did do what they were told he did, or that the Soviet Union was first in space and greatest ideologically, politically, economically and scientifically,

210

00:33:38,500 --> 00:33:41,500

all of that was very easy to accept.

211

00:33:42,500 --> 00:33:53,500

Nevertheless, Gagarin is given a hero's welcome and immediately sent on world tour as the spokesman for triumphant communism.

212

00:33:57,500 --> 00:34:00,500

The illusion flight becomes a non-event.

213

00:34:01,500 --> 00:34:11,500

The Kremlin apparently destroys all evidence of his mission, including films and photos, ordering all participants to keep quiet or else.

214

00:34:11,500 --> 00:34:27,500

Considering the thousands of people involved in the illusion's training, launch and post-flight recovery, the rubout of Vladimir Illusion's mission certainly rates as one of the greatest cover-ups in the history of mankind.

215

00:34:28,500 --> 00:34:39,500

A lot of us, of course, have wondered with some kind of awe and amazement how could they have managed to have kept it a secret up until the day that Gagarin shows up on television.

216

00:34:39,500 --> 00:34:51,500

And, you know, the simple answer is they have no other choice. Either that or your family would suffer. You'd lose your job, you'd go to prison, you'd be killed.

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00:34:51,500 --> 00:34:55,500

And that fear had a very powerful disappointing effect.

218

00:34:56,500 --> 00:35:04,500

So I think what came down was it was a joint decision that Vladimir would just basically just be quiet.

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00:35:04,500 --> 00:35:15,500

He had a career that he wanted to pursue as a test pilot and there was an agreement that he would be quiet and they wouldn't try to eliminate him.

220

00:35:16,500 --> 00:35:28,500

With the advent of Russian democracy and the rise of freedom, along with the recent accessibility of the Kremlin archives, Illusion's story can now be substantiated if not proven.

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00:35:28,500 --> 00:35:39,500

There were really three types of documents. There was pre-launch documentation. There was the catastrophe.

222

00:35:39,500 --> 00:35:47,500

And there were documents pertaining to discussions that took place after the event.

223

00:35:50,500 --> 00:36:06,500

Unsung as well, due to the paranoia and secrecy of the Soviet government, are the extraordinary accomplishments of another man, Sergei Korolov, the brilliant Soviet space designer, and father of the Russian space program.

224

00:36:07,500 --> 00:36:22,500

The Nobel Prize Committee on two occasions approaches Khrushchev, once in 1957 after Sputnik, and again in 1961 after Gagarin's flight, wanting to bestow the Nobel Prize to the chief Soviet rocket designer.

225

00:36:22,500 --> 00:36:29,500

But the name Korolov is never to become known to Westerners until well after his death.

226

00:36:29,500 --> 00:36:45,500

So it's have no reasonable explanation. It's even difficult not to explain to Americans, but to Russians now, why nobody wanted to give the name of Korolov when the Nobel Committee asked this because they want to give him Nobel Prize?

227

00:36:45,500 --> 00:37:06,500

And the Soviets told, no, no, we don't interest in Nobel Prize. He's secret. So it is part of this society, part of this society was just recovering from the Stalin history. It's taking a long time.

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00:37:06,500 --> 00:37:20,500

Probably the most interesting element of it was the Shakespearean character, the life that was led after these events by Gagarin in Aleutian.

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00:37:21,500 --> 00:37:47,500

Of course, if Gagarin was not the first in space, he was probably aware of that fact at some point, and that may have led to his demise, alcoholism and lack of control in public. Apparently he became very difficult for the Communist Party to cope with because he would say things in public that were an embarrassment, if not outright dangerous.

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00:37:48,500 --> 00:37:57,500

There are even reports of Gagarin throwing a glass of champagne in the face of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at a government function.

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00:37:58,500 --> 00:38:16,500

Thereafter, in March 1968, Gagarin dies in a highly publicized but equally suspicious MiG jet crash. His body is never recovered, and only a finger of the once great hero is found in the wreckage.

232

00:38:16,500 --> 00:38:40,500

This leads many experts to question the events of his death and inspires a full-scale investigation into the crash. In perhaps the ultimate irony, Vladimir Ilyushin is appointed to head the committee responsible for the investigation. The report is inconclusive, leaving many nagging questions unanswered.

233

00:38:40,500 --> 00:39:06,500

No details of Gagarin's death are released to the West. It is Ilyushin himself who tells us eyeball to eyeball what he has never told anyone else, that in his investigation of the crash, Gagarin's body simply wasn't there. They found the pilot's body strapped in right where it was supposed to be, but the only evidence of Gagarin was his finger.

234

00:39:11,500 --> 00:39:24,500

The life that was led by Ilyushin was actually quite significant. I mean, he did not only work as a test pilot after the fact, but he also became a significant designer.

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00:39:25,500 --> 00:39:44,500

I think it's kind of tragic that the one man who the world acknowledges still today as the great hero actually may have been of fabrication, and that's kind of a sad end to the story that the two guys went different ways and each in one sense got the reverse of what you would have expected.

236

00:39:44,500 --> 00:39:52,500

The hero wound up being the tragic figure, and the one that they tried to bury turned out to actually make a lasting contribution.

237

00:39:53,500 --> 00:40:15,500

General Vladimir Ilyushin still works today as a chief designer for the Sukhoi aircraft manufacturing company. To his credit, he has test piloted over 145 aircraft, including the Sukhoi-27, the premier Russian interceptor fighter jet.

238

00:40:16,500 --> 00:40:27,500

To this day, Vladimir maintains his silence over the events of April 1961, perhaps still fearing for himself and his family.

239

00:40:28,500 --> 00:40:47,500

The legacy of the Soviet Union in the space arena that is most troubling is this need to cover the old bad stories and the old hard truths and either gloss over them or deny them.

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00:40:47,500 --> 00:41:11,500

The conclusion I've come to in hearing their responses is that it's just too hard that even though the permission is there, the social permission, the bureaucratic permission, the emotional and bureaucratic baggage of getting all of this story told is just too much.

241

00:41:18,500 --> 00:41:31,500

In the midst of the secrecy and cover-ups, there lives a hero who must take consolation in the knowledge that he has through his personal efforts propelled humankind to a place not previously known.

242

00:41:31,500 --> 00:41:41,500

Thanks to Vladimir Ilyushin, our world enjoys technological achievements from which we are all still reaping the benefits.

243

00:41:41,500 --> 00:41:50,500

Finally, with the truth uncovered, Vladimir Ilyushin's sacrifice of silence may no longer be in vain.

244

00:41:53,500 --> 00:42:06,500

In a fax he sent us before we traveled to meet Ilyushin in Russia, he assured us that we would have our story, that he would be interviewed and stayed on camera, that he was indeed the first man in space.

245

00:42:06,500 --> 00:42:14,500

But when we arrived at his home and sat down with his family for dinner, his change of heart made it clear that someone had gotten to him first.

246

00:42:14,500 --> 00:42:18,500

Will Russia ever come clean and admit the truth about Ilyushin's flight?

247

00:42:18,500 --> 00:42:24,500

Maybe not, but it matters less now, since we've found the facts in phenomenon archives.

248

00:42:36,500 --> 00:42:41,500

The first time I visited Ilyushin, I was in a very strange place.

249

00:42:41,500 --> 00:42:46,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

250

00:42:46,500 --> 00:42:51,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

251

00:42:51,500 --> 00:42:56,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

252

00:42:56,500 --> 00:43:01,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

253

00:43:01,500 --> 00:43:06,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

254

00:43:06,500 --> 00:43:11,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

255

00:43:11,500 --> 00:43:16,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

256

00:43:16,500 --> 00:43:21,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

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00:43:21,500 --> 00:43:26,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

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00:43:26,500 --> 00:43:31,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

259

00:43:31,500 --> 00:43:36,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

260

00:43:36,500 --> 00:43:41,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

261

00:43:41,500 --> 00:43:46,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

262

00:43:46,500 --> 00:43:51,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

263

00:43:51,500 --> 00:43:56,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

264

00:43:56,500 --> 00:44:01,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

265

00:44:01,500 --> 00:44:06,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

266

00:44:06,500 --> 00:44:11,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.

267

00:44:11,500 --> 00:44:16,500

I was in a very strange place, and I was in a very strange place.