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STRANGERS ON THE BRIDGE

by: James Britt DONOVAN

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Indexed

The book describes the trial of Colonel Rudolph ABEL, who was KGB resident in the United States from 1948 up to the time of his arrest in June 1957. The author was the counsel for the defendant and the book is written only from this point of view. The greater part of it is devoted to the legal matters connected with the trial such as the author's reasons for his acceptance of the defense in an unpopular case of espionage; the analysis of the indictment; the selection of the jury; innumerable objections of the defense during the examination of the witnesses; the summations by the defense and the prosecution; the instructions to the jury by the presiding judge; the announcement of the verdict and its motivation; and, finally, the author's participation in the action resulting in ABEL's exchange for a United States citizen held in a Soviet prison. For the author, ABEL was not only a Soviet agent, but also and primarily his client, an educated and honest man who served his country and had the misfortune to have been caught. The author considered it his duty to save him from the gallows by showing that the Government failed to prove its case.

At the trial, the Government's case was based almost exclusively on the testimony of ABEL's deputy, Lt. Colonel Reino HAYHANEN, who in 1957 had been recalled to the USSR because of his inefficiency. He defected in Paris to the US Embassy and revealed to the US authorities ABEL's existence, functions and activities. The defense counsel described this main prosecution witness, HAYHANEN, as a bigamist, alcoholic and embezzler, based largely on the man's own admissions. But his clear and concrete testimony withstood the vehement cross-examination and convinced the jury. The result: a verdict of guilty.

The defense did not put ABEL on the witness stand and he apparently did not reveal to his lawyer anything about his personal background, contacts and activities. But he helped the prosecution by committing a blunder long before his arrest, a surprising blunder for such an experienced

operator. HAYHANEN knew ABEL only by his code name and, according to instructions from Moscow, was not supposed to know where he lived. At one meeting between the two men, HAYHANEN told ABEL that he was in urgent need of photographic material and ABEL took him into his Brooklyn studio. It was night and HAYHANEN did not know the address of the studio but only the approximate location. After HAYHANEN's defection, while ABEL was resting in Florida waiting for things to cool off, the FBI located the studio, broke in and found the following tools of his real profession: a high-powered w/t set, cypher books, cameras, special films for microdot photography, and a number of various concealment devices. In addition, they found a photo picture of the COHEN couple and six thousand dollars. All of this material was introduced by prosecution at the trial.

At the request of the Government some matters were eliminated from the court's proceedings for obvious security reasons. That is why there is much more detailed information in the book about the witness HAYHANEN than about the defendant ABEL. Very few contacts with the agents or prospective agents are mentioned in the book. It is therefore impossible to glean from this book, a clear picture of the extent, effectiveness and main objectives of the net headed by ABEL.

The name of Helen SOBEL was mentioned during the trial, but only en passant. Five thousand dollars was to be delivered to her by HAYHANEN, via a letter drop, but he kept the money for himself.

The case of M/Sgt. RHODES was also introduced during the proceedings only to demonstrate the recruiting methods of Soviet intelligence. RHODES was recruited by MGB agents while serving at the US Embassy in Moscow. At the time of ABEL's trial he was already under house arrest and was being interrogated by the FBI. Later he was tried and HAYHANEN was the main witness for the prosecution in that case as well.

ABEL was sentenced in November 1957 to 30 years imprisonment and a fine of three thousand dollars. In January 1962 through the intermediation of DONOVAN, he was released from prison and on 10 February he was exchanged for Francis Gary POWERS, the U-2 pilot who was serving 10 years imprisonment sentence in the Soviet Union. The exchange took place on Gliencke Bridge which links the US sector of Berlin with the Soviet zone of Germany.

HAYHANEN was killed in 1961 in a car accident on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The author calls it "a mysterious crash".

A number of interesting points concerning modus operandi emerge from the book;

Cover story -- It took four full years of careful preparation to establish a cover story for HAYHANEN, the prospective deputy resident in the United States. In 1948, HAYHANEN was instructed in Moscow to assume the name of Eugene Nicoli MAKI, an American, born in Idaho, who as a small child traveled in 1927 to Finland with his parents. It is assumed that in 1943 all members of MAKI's family were dead. HAYHANEN was smuggled to Finland in the trunk of a car driven by two Soviet officials accredited in Finland. His first task was to establish that Eugene MAKI lived in Finland since 1943. HAYHANEN bribed two false witnesses who testified to that effect. Then, for two and half years HAYHANEN lived as Eugene MAKI in the cities of Tampere and Turku, working in factories, building safes and doing auto-body repairs. In 1952, he applied for a US passport at the US Embassy in Helsinki. He claimed that he was an American citizen, born 30 May 1919 in Enaville, Idaho and produced a birth certificate to support his claim. In his application he alleged that his mother was born in New York and that his father was born in Finland and was a naturalized American citizen. He also claimed that when he was eight years old he traveled with his parents to Estonia where he lived with his mother until her death in 1941. His father, he alleged, died in 1933. To strengthen his story, HAYHANEN married a Finnish girl the same year (1951). The US passport was issued to him on 23 July 1952, and he was ready to travel to the USA.

This elaborate and carefully prepared cover story was given to a man whose character was misjudged and whose alcoholism, acts of bigamy and squandromania were overlooked. In 1957, the RIS paid dearly for this bad assessment.

Recruitment -- According to HAYHANEN, ABEL said it was a practice of Soviet intelligence to recruit husband and wife.

M/Sgt. RHODES, serving at the US Embassy in Moscow, was recruited by use of blackmail. He celebrated the impending arrival of his wife and daughter to Moscow in the company of two Russian employers of the US Embassy one of them a female. RHODES got drunk and slept with the girl. After that, he was correct.

• contacted by two NKVD officials and persuaded to collaborate. He worked for the NKVD during the entire time of his service in Moscow. After his return to the USA, ABEL made an attempt to contact him and make him continue his collaboration.

Training -- HAYHANEN's training for his mission in the United States consisted of the following curriculum: photography; English lessons; driving and repairing of automobiles; coding and decoding; advanced photography techniques, including reduction of the text to pinhead size and treatment of the film to make it soft and pliable so it would fit into a hollowed container, such as a coin or pencil.

Compensation -- HAYHANEN as deputy resident was paid \$600 a month plus \$100 travel expenses.

Dead drops -- HAYHANEN was assigned three drops by the Moscow center. Two of them he described: one was a hole between the sidewalk and the wall; the other the base of a lamp-post.

Another type of drop was also used: a magnetic container was attached to a lamp-post. The person who was to receive the contents of the drop would stand nearby and would act as a look-out while the container was being attached; the look-out would retrieve it later.

Concealment devices -- Microdots were used frequently during the first period of ABEL's operation. They were hidden under the staple of a magazine mailed to Paris. Many magazines did not reach their destination and the practice was discontinued. Another device was a hollowed coin. The device was made from a split coin with a little hole containing the trigger.

Communication -- ABEL recorded radio messages on a tape recorder, then he replayed the tape and put the message on paper.

Certain limited communication signals were also employed: chalk signs drawn on certain pre-determined places had the following meaning: a horizontal line meant "I have message for my superiors." A vertical line meant "I received the message from one of my drops."

HAYHANEN was instructed by the Moscow center not to transmit personal data, the place of work, and the address in the same message, even if the data were enciphered.

Concerning the author, the book provides these details:

James Britt DONOVAN was born in New York City in 1916. He completed Fordham University and Harvard Law School and became a noted New York lawyer. During the war, he was an assistant to the Director of O.S.S. and later he was assistant to the US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. In 1963, he succeeded in obtaining the release of 9700 Cubans and Americans from Cuba. At present, he is president of the Board of Education in Brooklyn, New York.

The analysts extracted sufficient counterintelligence data for [REDACTED] forms in the course of their analysis.

The [REDACTED] were checked with the following results:

Alexander Mikhailovich KOROTKOV -- In a memorandum, dated 28 May 1936, prepared in Berlin by the Russian Committee for German economy, it was stated that the Soviet Union was trying to increase its trade relations with the US. A number of Soviet missions consisting of engineers and economists arrived in the US during the months immediately preceding the date of the memo. A list of these missions was contained in the captured document. Inu KOROTKOV was listed as a member of the delegation of the Peoples' Commissariat for Agriculture.

In the course of the interrogation of Capt. Alexander SHIGUNOV, a NKVD commissar who was captured by the Germans on 16 August 1941, he revealed the names of a number of NKVD officers. Among them was the name Inu KOROTKOV, who SHIGUNOV said was a member of the Soviet Embassy in the US before the World War II. [REDACTED]

Ivan A. SHISHKIN -- German Foreign Ministry memorandum, dated 27 September 1933, contained a list of complaints made by the Soviet Embassy in Berlin concerning mistreatment of Soviet citizens by the German Police. Among the Soviet complaints was the matter concerning Inu SHISHKIN, an official of the Soviet trade mission in Mannheim, whose house was searched on 14 March 1933. The search, it was said, produced no results. [REDACTED]