

INTELLIGENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC LITERATURE

III Told Tales

SPION VOOR NATO. By Evert Reydon. (Amsterdam: Polak & van
Gennep. 1967. 330 pp. 18.50.)

Evert Reydon, an engineering officer in the Dutch merchant marine, was recruited by the Dutch Foreign Intelligence Service in 1957. From then until 1961 the Dutch Service, in conjunction with MI-6, used him primarily as an observation and Elint collection agent in Soviet ports at which his ship called. In July 1961 he and a merchant marine colleague were sent as legal travelers by automobile on an observation mission to the USSR. As they attempted to leave the country, on 20 August, they were arrested by the KGB. In October they were tried, found guilty of espionage for NATO, and sentenced to 13 years in prison. In November 1963, after considerable behind-the-scenes negotiations, they were released and returned to The Netherlands. Reydon's colleague, who had stood up nobly during his trial, telling the court he was proud of his services to his country and the West—something Reydon did not do—suffered a nervous breakdown soon after his return and has been in a Dutch mental institution ever since. Reydon found on his return that Dutch shipping companies, most of which do business with the Bloc, would not rehire him. With official help he bought a gas station but failed to make a go of it; he was a taxi driver at the time he wrote this purported autobiography.


The publication of the book in May 1967 created quite a stir in the Dutch press and was even noted by the Soviets in their domestic broadcasts. This was understandable; Reydon was the first Dutchman to have written about his espionage exploits for his country and her allies since World War II. But except for recounting the disclosures made at his Moscow trial, he offers the reader a story with little relation to his actual activities. The following caveat, which, in small print on the inside of the face plate, is calculated to be missed by most readers, betrays the real tone of the book: "All the situations and most of the persons described in this book live only in the imagination of the writer, and hopefully will live only in the imagination of the reader."

The book is divided into three sections. The first details Reydon's youth, his entering the Dutch merchant marine, and his recruitment

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and training as a "NATO spy" in The Netherlands, the UK, and France, the second tells of purported espionage activities, primarily for the British, in the Middle East, where he claims he was employed under a BOAC cover, and the third covers his training, dispatch, fancied exploits, capture, interrogation, trial, and imprisonment in the USSR. He claims he dealt with George Blake in the Middle East and met Gary Powers, Greville Wynne, and others in his Soviet prison. The book is filled with his adventures with women of various nationalities, including an American college girl in the Middle East.

Facts are lost in fantasy, with great self-damage to the author, for he had served his country and the West well. By making himself a junior James Bond he may have boosted the sale of his book, but this cheap, flamboyant story can only degrade his real contribution.