

The man who broke the Canadian espionage ring tells how . . .

STALIN SENT ME TO SPY SCHOOL



by IGOR GOUZENKO as told to ANNE FROMER

Late one night in the code room of Soviet spy headquarters for North America, Igor Gouzenko put a carefully prepared plan into action. He slipped 109 secret documents into the lining of his coat. Then he walked out of the building—the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa—for the last time.

Why did Gouzenko voluntarily change his allegiance to democracy? What single incident convinced him that the Soviet cause he was serving was false?

In this article are the answers. Here, for the first time, Igor Gouzenko tells the story of one of the most sinister adventures of our time. —The Editors.

MY NAME IS IGOR GOUZENKO. My two children have never heard that name. Nor have our neighbors in the community where we now live quietly as Canadian citizens.

Fewer than a dozen people—my wife, myself, and a tight-lipped handful of Royal Canadian Mounted Police and FBI officials—share the secret. Only they know that the man I now am was the Russian intelligence officer who made a decision which was to change the course of today's history—and tomorrow's.

By my decision I became the first Russian citizen, educated, trained and indoctrinated in Moscow as an agent of clandestine Soviet policy, to change allegiance voluntarily to democracy.

This step does not make me personally important. I did not even know, when I walked through the hidden steel door of the coding section of the Soviet Embassy at Ottawa for the last time, how crucial was the timing of my decision to world affairs.

I brought with me 109 highly incriminatory documents. These, and my personal testimony of activities I participated in both in Moscow and Ottawa, added up to an incredible blueprint of Soviet espionage.

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onage, reaching into the heart of every nation.

But did the uncovering of the Soviet spy rings and the launching of strong countermeasures halt the Russian espionage operation? It did not—and that fact seems incredible to the average American. However, to understand why espionage continues unabated, an American must understand:

First, that the violation of another country's private affairs is as much an instrument of Soviet policy as is the Monroe Doctrine an instrument of American policy.

Second, that in the Soviet system, Americans are dealing with a people whose training, whose thinking, whose very conception of right and wrong, of international morality, are utterly contrary to their own.

To understand, an American would have to live at first-hand, as I did, the almost unreal life of a Soviet agent at Moscow intelligence headquarters and in the field. Here, for the first time, I can tell publicly the facts I was able to reveal to the authorities of the U. S., Canada and Great Britain.

Even to a Russian nurtured in intrigue it was a strange, single-purposed world of secrecy and discipline which I entered when I was assigned as a code officer to intelligence headquarters in Moscow. This grim, closely guarded building at Kropotkin Gate is the nerve center which both directs the activities and reaps the harvest of espionage information from agents planted all over the world.

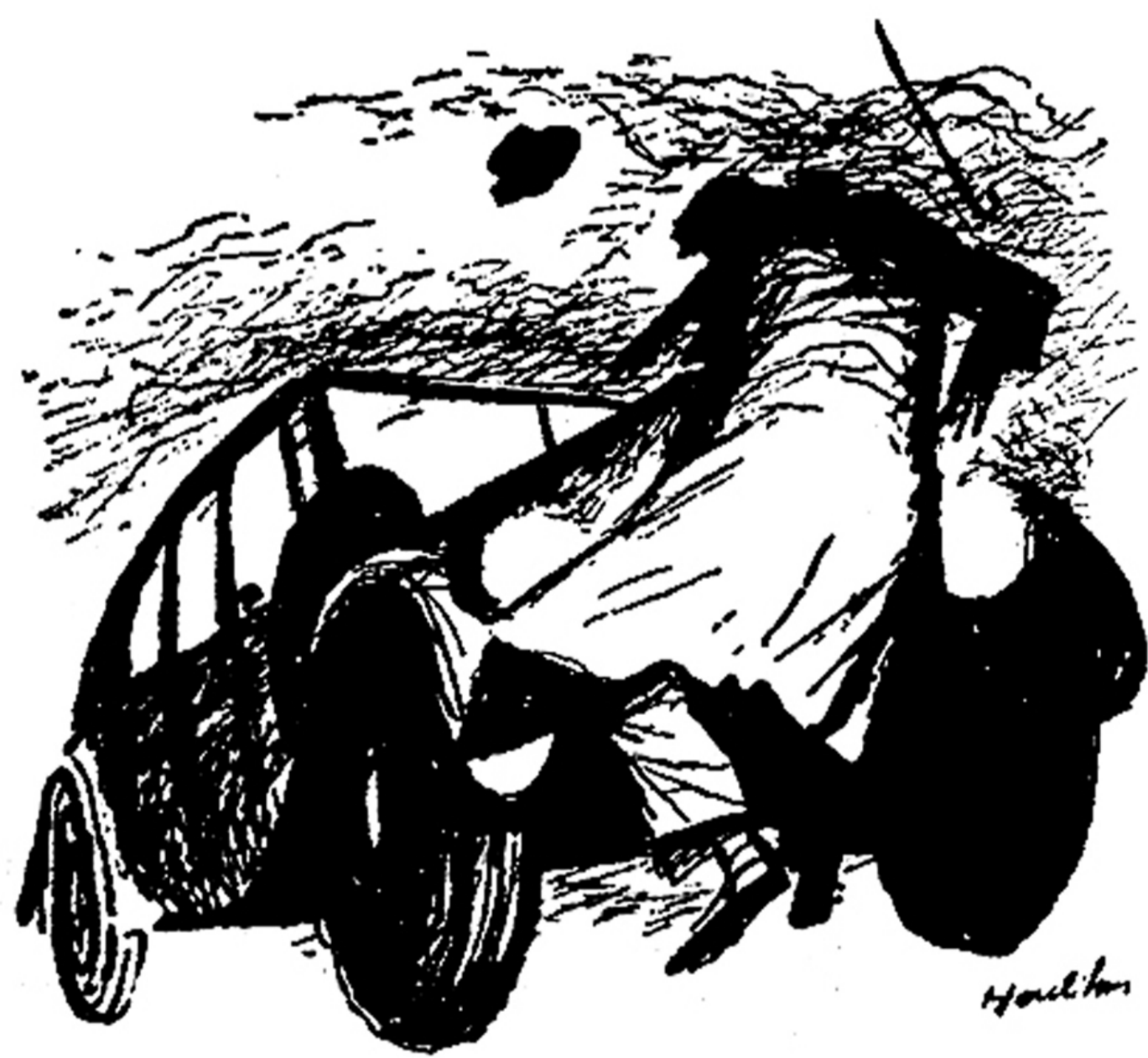
It is staffed by 5,000 men and women, specialists in the many fields of science, political analysis, military affairs and economics, and required to interpret, assess and implement the secret information supplied by an even larger army of agents in the field. The directors

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of this headquarters are inner-circle Russians, but experts working under them are of many nationalities. As colleagues, I had renegade Englishmen, Americans, Canadians, Frenchmen, Turks, Hawaiians and Japanese.

The material on which this large staff worked consisted of a daily flow of coded cable messages, usually routed through Soviet embassies abroad; microfilms of secret documents too long and complex to be coded and cabled, and therefore transmitted by diplomatic mail; scientific formulas and technical layouts brought in personally by official couriers because they were too important or too dangerous to be trusted to any other means of transmission.

The top-secret documents, after I and other code officers had deciphered them, were taken by the Chief of our Section to the Kremlin offices of Stalin, Molotov or Malenkov. Key agents were required to return to Moscow periodically. On



arrival, they were housed in a government residence outside Moscow, where they were visited almost daily by high Soviet officials, including Stalin himself.

We Soviet agents—that is, Russians specially trained for duties in intelligence headquarters or in the field—were never in any doubt as to the objectives of our work. These

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were outlined in black and white on our secret indoctrination papers: *The undermining of democratic countries from within. The designing of a plan for delivering major crippling blows when the time becomes ripe. Meanwhile, our continuing assignment is the procurement of a complete picture of the secret and confidential political, economic, military and scientific developments of every country.*

Considering the vastness of the stakes for which Russia is playing, it is easy to understand the motto of Soviet intelligence: "Failure is not tolerated." I was shown proof of the relentless manner in which this policy was carried out, not long after I had joined the intelligence headquarters.

The man in the small office next to mine, a young lieutenant named Panchenko, was in charge of distributing incoming and outgoing telegrams. One afternoon, the entire staff was ordered to assemble to hear an order of the day issued by General Ilyichev, intelligence chief. In terse, cold phrases the message stated that an attendant, while dumping waste paper into the incinerator (every scrap of paper not filed was burned at the end of every working day) had found an envelope containing a memo. This proved to be a code message of instruction from Molotov to Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London. The negligence had been traced to Lieutenant Panchenko.

Eight days later we were again assembled to hear an order of the day: "Former Lieutenant Panchenko was this morning, by decision of the Military Tribunal, executed by firing squad."

Our chiefs did not wait for mistakes to turn up. They went searching for them. Any day might bring a general check-up. We would look up from our desks at the sudden opening of the door. N.K.V.D.

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agents would file into the room. The order would be barked: "Everyone remain seated, hands on desks!" They would then pass through the ranks and search us.

The chief object of the search was to catch anyone who might be taking notes of secret telegrams. The penalty for that, of course, was summary execution. We were shadowed periodically when we left intelligence headquarters, and would be called upon for detailed explanations if there was anything "suspicious" in our movements.

TODAY, MY WIFE ANNA and I are under sentence of death, pronounced in absentia by the Military Tribunal in Moscow. I was ominously aware, when I walked out of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, my shirt padded with incriminating documents from the secret files, that my next encounter might be with a "wet agent." I knew only too intimately from my association with them in Moscow how these men went about their missions.

Among the telegrams and cables I handled at intelligence headquarters were dozens which concerned "wet affairs"—our euphemism for the liquidation of agents in the field who had failed or outlived their usefulness or were suspected of wavering. A typical such message, addressed to the Chief of Soviet Intelligence in China, read:

"Put away Kim. Entrust Knat with the work . . ." both code names, of course. What Kim's crime was, we never knew. But we did know what led to his body being found not long afterward in an alley in Harbin.

The procedure always followed the same pattern—a pattern based on proved success. When an agent was marked for removal anywhere in the world, it usually became the duty of the military attaché in that

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country to draw up a detailed plan of action for Moscow's approval. The plan, when agreed upon, was turned over to a special section of Military Intelligence in Moscow known as O.S.Z., the "branch of special tasks."

An "expert in wet affairs," perhaps posing as a diplomatic courier, then flew to the scene. His mission accomplished, he flew back to Moscow like any other diplomatic courier, bearing a pouch of mail. If the pouch happened to be one containing espionage reports, that was just an extra task that the "wet agent" had accomplished.

ONE OF THESE "wet agents" used to eat in our dining room at intelligence headquarters, a beetle-browed, somber man who, even to us trained in ruthlessness, was a menacing figure. On his return after absences of some days, we had a grim indication of the nature of his mission: if it were a successful "wet affair," he would be wearing an addition to the rows of medals on his breast. In other words, a deed which Americans would regard with revulsion was to the Soviet mind an act of distinction.

The most significant fact about Soviet espionage is that this policy of "failure is not tolerated" resulted in almost incredible success. When my revelations of spying in Canada were detailed to Prime Minister King, he asked: "To what extent were these objectives achieved?" The R.C.M.P. briefing officer replied grimly: "Sir, there were no failures!"

I personally had a hand in a dozen examples of top-secret scientific and political information reaching the Soviet Politburo: a significant part of the secret of the atom bomb; files of cables exchanged by the English and Canadian Governments, the contents of which were so secret that they have not yet been made public; reports of confidential

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American foreign-policy decisions received a matter of hours after they were arrived at; photostats of the contents of an Allied embassy in China, detailing Western policy toward Chiang Kai-shek at the time when China's fate hung in the balance; some 700 pages of the secret library of the National Research Council of Canada, covering detailed reports of findings by American, British and Canadian scientists.

The sharing of military and scientific secrets by the Allies was a great help to Soviet espionage. I recall an occasion in which our intelligence was very anxious to get information on a highly confidential matter which was known, as far as we were aware, only to top U. S. officials. But as a matter of routine, the query was sent to agents in no fewer than 20 countries. Soviet agents in America could get nothing on this particular matter—but the right answers came from both Great Britain and Canada.

Usually, however, queries to the U. S. network were most rewarding. Once, in Moscow, I decoded a long cable from our military attaché at Washington and took it into the office of my section chief. He was usually a dour, silent man, but on this occasion he unbent enough to ask me how I was getting along with my work. In the course of the conversation which followed, I asked him how it was that American and English authorities were unable to uncover our agents when there were so many of them.

He smiled wanly. "Our strength is in those very numbers," he answered.



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“The authorities nip one, and think they have ‘cleared up the situation’—but nine stay free to continue our work. Moreover, some of our most valued agents are in such high places that they could scarcely be suspected of treason.”

Once an agent, provided with expertly forged papers, was established in a country, his every move was directed by our headquarters. No detail was too small for the personal attention of the Moscow chief. I recall handling an exchange of cables with an agent in a Scandinavian country, whose main source of espionage information was a girl employed in an important government agency. To obtain her complete cooperation, the agent had convinced the girl—her cover name was Marjie—that he was desperately in love with her.

Finally the situation reached a crisis. Marjie wanted to marry the agent, who already had a wife at home. Hurriedly he cabled his chief for instructions. Without delay the latter handed me this reply to be coded and dispatched:

“Marry the girl immediately. We will inform your present wife that Soviet interests require that you do so.”

In virtually every country, the Soviet embassy plays a dual role as the seat of normal diplomatic relations—and as headquarters for espionage. Almost every Soviet embassy employee, too, has double functions—only one of which is

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known to the country to which he is credited.

When my superiors decided to assign me to Canada, I was called into the office of Captain Koudriashov, member of the executive committee of the Soviet intelligence service. He paced the floor as he spoke to me:

“The Canadian Government will be told that your position is that of a secretary. Your specific duties



are listed as ‘reading and clipping Canadian newspapers in order to prepare a thesis on Canadian cultural trends.’ But of course, you know what your real duties are....”

Like every other Soviet citizen sent abroad in any capacity whatever, I was given a false biography. My birthplace was given as the town of Gorki. I was falsely described as an economic specialist, a graduate of the Economics Technical Institute at Gorki.

The reason for this is to conceal from other governments the background and training of Russians assigned as clerks, attachés and even ambassadors.

The point is that virtually no Soviet emissary of any rank is “clean.” Nearly everyone, from ambassadors down, belongs to one or another branch of Soviet intelligence—military, N.K.V.D., political, scientific or some other of the

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nine separate espionage networks directed from Moscow.

The Ambassador to Canada when I arrived at the Embassy was Zarubin, a military-intelligence official first and a diplomat second. Zarubin is now Soviet Ambassador at Washington.

The directors of the theft of atomic secrets by Dr. Klaus Fuchs and Harry Gold were Anatoli Yakovlev and Semen Semenov, both legitimately accredited to the U. S. by the Soviet Government.

Two rooms in the Soviet Embassy at Ottawa housed incinerators, an ordinary one for the routine burning of papers, the other a massive furnace intended for the quick destruction of documents in an emergency. Pavlov, the N.K.V. D. head in Canada, who designed it, once told me: "It is big enough to dispose of a man's body."

In this setting I played my role for over a year in the world-wide drama of Russian espionage. Soon after I became an "inside link" in the Soviet's most important network—North America—I became involved in what was later to be known as the Canadian Spy Ring.

Through my hands now began to pass documents of the most secret nature. Now I understood the value of one section of files in Moscow headquarters—a section I had thought was an example of thoroughness carried to extremes. This was nothing less than a complete dossier of every individual in every country who had any connection with government, the armed forces, key industry, or an intellectual or cultural occupation which might be turned to Russia's advantage. Any reader who comes under any of those categories today may be sure that Moscow has a detailed file on his or her professional and personal life and political leanings. I saw how this information was used to the full in Canada.

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For example, to obtain material on Canada's military installations, their location, production and technical details of construction, the Canadian agent recruited was Harold Gerson, head of a section of the directorate for war material procurement, as well as a key official of the ammunition branch of the Canadian Government's Department of Munitions and Supply.

To get the desired part of the contents of the confidential document safe of the National Research Council, which detailed secret developments in which the U. S., Britain and Canada were collaborating, we enlisted Durnford Smith, research engineer on the staff of the Council. Copies of cables exchanged by the governments of Canada and Britain, their contents so secret that they have not yet been revealed, were obtained for us by Emma Woikin, cipher clerk at the Canadian External Affairs Department.

These are only random examples. The documents I smuggled out of the Soviet Embassy included lists of "cover" names of secret agents of Russian, British, Canadian and U. S. citizenship which ran to three pages. Many of them were identified by clever detective work, prosecuted, and given long sentences.

Looking back to my tour of duty at the Russian Embassy in Ottawa, I can see now that my decision to renounce my country was in the making for months. In fact, that decision started a few minutes before I set foot on Canadian soil.

From the transport plane which brought me to this country from Moscow, I could see the city of Edmonton laid out below, clean, with fine buildings and each house set on its own lot. Major Romanov, on the seat next to me, spoke my thoughts when he said: "I wonder where the workers live?"

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It was unthinkable that Canadian workers, who we had been assured were much worse off than Russian workers, could live in such houses. In Moscow, my mother, my sister and I had been fortunate to obtain living quarters in a "model" residential building, which meant that we shared our single room with only three other people. There were two kitchens to serve the entire building, and the stench of stale food, rotting garbage and dirty clothes was everywhere.

On the train en route to Ottawa, we passed a large factory building near Winnipeg, surrounded by parked automobiles. I remarked to a Canadian fellow passenger that there must be a big government inspection at the plant that day. I could think of no other reason why so many cars would be there.

The Canadian answered laughingly: "Why, those cars belong to the factory hands!"

I had been warned to beware of shameless propaganda by the Canadians, but I did not expect anything so brazen as that. For the rest of the journey I carefully avoided conversation with the man.

Once we had settled in Ottawa, the differences between Canada and Russia were a revelation to Anna and myself; the vast variety of food, clothing and other articles at low prices in stores open to everyone. In Moscow, Anna would return home triumphant if a wait of several hours in a line-up rewarded her with a single onion!

But the turning point in my decision came one day in an Ottawan fruit store we frequented. The old Lithuanian immigrant dealer, unmindful of the presence of customers, verbally attacked the party in power. "No damn chance I vote for the Liberals again!" he shouted. At first, we were frightened by his boldness, but soon this little man

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became for me a living symbol of democracy in action. It was perhaps he, more than anyone else, who put me on the path which I was soon to take.

Our attitude may seem naive to you—it seems so to us today. But it is important to understand that the truth about the democratic way of life takes time to make its impact on people who have grown up under Soviet indoctrination, even those who get the rare opportunity to live in a democracy.

It is important because so many Westerners believe that only lack of communication prevents the Russian people from knowing the truth about conditions in the democracies, that a few radio broadcasts or pamphlets can bridge the gap.

That is simply not so. I myself must confess that even after I had made the decision to renounce the Russian way of life, I could not convince myself that democratic freedom was actually as real as it appeared on the surface. Until near the end, for example, I carefully avoided conversation while waiting for an Ottawa streetcar, if one of the transit company girls who sold tickets and guided travelers happened to be standing nearby. Embassy officials were convinced that these girls were Canadian secret police, assigned to listen to and report on the people.

Today, I believe more than ever that what I did, all the risks I took—and am still taking—to reveal to the democracies the extent and purpose of Soviet espionage, were worth while. Prime Minister King was good enough to tell me publicly: “You have accomplished an historical act. The people of the world are your debtors.”

I can accept this as deserved only if the free people of the world will cease to be indifferent to the heritage that is theirs, only if they will

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defend their priceless democracy both physically and spiritually.

To appreciate your own good fortune in being a citizen of a democracy, you should know what Soviet agents who are working for the downfall of Western nations really think about the Americans, Canadians and Englishmen who undertake espionage work for Russia. Lieutenant Colonel Rogov, one of the Soviet espionage directors in Canada, put this feeling into words one night when we were returning from a meeting with one such agent:

“I cannot understand these people. How can they betray such a country? What more could they possibly want?”



Igor Gourzenko

(1919 - 1982)