

Pathfinder

JULY 13, 1949

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The Coplon Verdict

"Don't think that the Russian espionage agents in this country picked Judith Coplon hastily," chief Prosecutor John M. Kelley Jr. told tired but attentive jurors last week. ". . . They took their time . . . they penetrated that veneer of innocence—and they found beneath a hard core of steel!

"They found in Judith Coplon a girl who hates many people and many things. Above all, they found a girl who hated the United States Government.

"They found," he boomed, "a clever spy!"

Methodically, Kelley riddled the defenses of the attractive ex-Justice Department analyst accused of espionage for Russia. Mercilessly, he tore into her story that her relationship with the suspended Russian U.N. engineer, Valentine A. Gubitchev, with whom she was arrested in New York last Mar. 4, was merely a kissless romance.

Again and again, the prosecutor harked back to last fortnight, when he had asked the defendant suddenly: "Is it not the truth that on . . . Jan. 7 [while she claimed to be "deeply in love" with Gubitchev] you spent the night in room 412 in the Southern Hotel in Baltimore, Md., . . . registered with a man under the name of Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Shapiro [identified later as Harold P. Shapiro, a Justice Department lawyer] . . .?"

"That's a damned lie!," Judith had replied, almost hysterically, but she admitted moments later to spending a sleepless night at the hotel.

Bitter Tribute. For defense attorney Archibald Palmer, whose heckling he had withstood throughout the 10-week trial, Kelley had bitter words:

"He dug deep to find epithets . . . to describe myself and my associates, to tell you we had betrayed our trust, had taken part in a conspiracy to frame the defendant."

More than once, the barrel-shaped Palmer had turned the court into near-bedlam. He had tried to show that Government papers found in Judith's purse Mar. 4 were study material for a Civil Service exam and source material for a novel.

Bigger Issues. Accidentally or deliberately, Palmer has also opened issues far more important than the conviction of one spy. He had set legal precedent by forcing the Justice Department, through a ruling by Judge Albert L. Reeves, to produce documents from which 34 FBI "data slips" in her purse had been excerpted.

He provoked a bitter, although short-lived, dispute between Attorney General Tom Clark and FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover.

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ver. Above all, Palmer had made thousands of Americans ponder the need for revising laws which permit the smearing of innocents to try one suspect.

To the jury, Palmer delivered in summation a hell-for-leather, 2-hour-and-10-minute diatribe, built around a quotation well known to old-hand jurors and Bible readers.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged,” he shouted. “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone. . . .”

Then, at exactly 11:12 a.m., last Wednesday, the jury of eight men and four women, six of them white, six colored, filed out. The 75-year-old jurist had told them to brush aside non-essentials and consider only the question: Did Judith intend to give Gubitchev the data slips, and did she believe they would be used to help a foreign country?

Thursday, after the jury had been out 27 hours and 22 minutes, it reached a verdict. Judith Coplon was guilty on both counts.

Rap. Judge Reeves sentenced her to two consecutive jail sentences, one of 40 months to 10 years, the other of one to three years.

Judith, freed on \$20,000 bond, now must stand trial with Gubitchev in New York for conspiring to commit espionage. To the very end, she refused to plead for mercy. “To me, pleading for mercy means an admission of guilt,” she said.

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Judy Goes to D.C.

The trial of Judith Coplon, former Justice Department aide, began this week in Washington's Federal District Court.

In defense of the petite, 27-year-old Brooklynite, who is charged with taking “espionage data of national defense” nature from the department's files, her attorney asked first that Federal Judge Albert L. Reeves quash the indictment. Reeves (called in from Kansas City because Washington judges were “too busy” to handle the case) refused, and thereby rejected the defense's main contention: The nine Government-employed grand jurors who indicted Judith had feared “reprisals” if they didn't.

Trial after Trial. After her Washington appearance which could bring her 15 years and a \$12,000 fine, Miss Coplon must stand trial in New York with her alleged Russian accomplice, Valentine Gubitchev, suspended U.N. employe.

After trial both may face grilling from the House Un-American Activities Committee. The committee was displaying new interest last week-end in foreign-diplomat-spy possibilities, charging the Polish embassy was a Communist spy-nest; had maintained a scientist, Dr. Ignace Zlotowski, to steal atomic secrets.

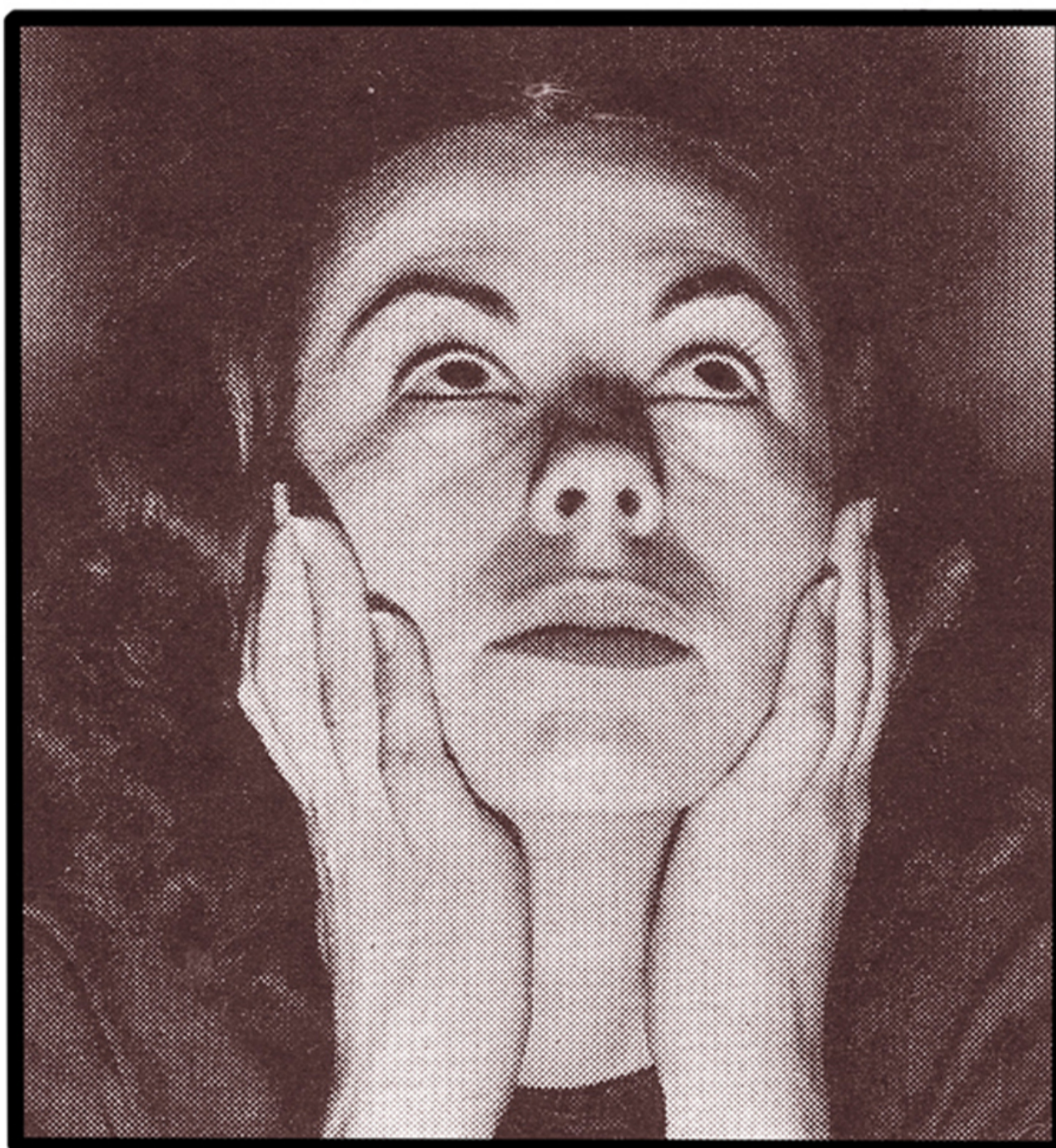
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WHAT'S IN A FACE?

Judith Coplon's, during ten weeks of trial, had run the gamut between laughter and hate.



"Frame-up! . . . This whole case is so fishy it smells to high heaven! . . ."



"I was looking . . . at the pictures . . . modern art . . . surrealistic, cubistic . . ."

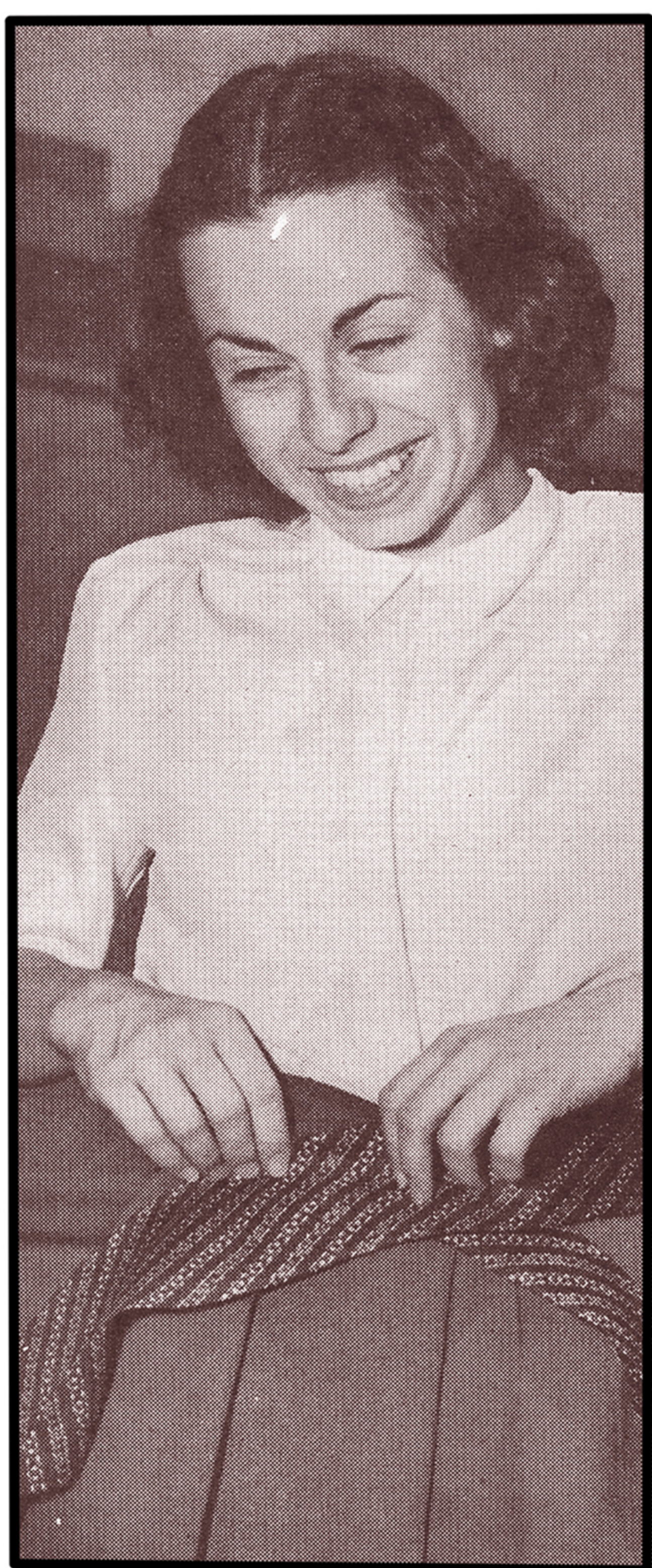


"You branded me a spy and now you are trying to brand me as a harlot . . ."

(continued)



“The book dealt also with the witch hunt the hysteria . . . ridiculous and tragic . .



“You know, that tie got me into an awful lot of trouble. . . .”

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