



Abel: The True Story of the Spy They Traded for Gary Powers (Dialogue Espionage Classics)

Vin Arthey

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On 10 February 1962, Gary Powers, the American pilot whose U-2 spy plane was shot down in Soviet airspace, was brought to Berlin's Glienicke Bridge, where he was to take part in the most famous prisoner exchange in history.

The man Powers was traded for was one Colonel Rudolf Abel, a cover name for KGB Colonel Vilyam Fisher, one of the most extraordinary characters in the history of the Cold War.

Abel/Fisher was born plain Willie Fisher in Newcastle upon Tyne, son to revolutionary parents who fled Tsarist oppression in Russia. Arriving in the newly formed Soviet Union in 1921, Fisher was trained as a spy and eventually sent to New York, where, posing as an artist, he ran the network that purloined America's atomic secrets.

In 1957, his luck ran out and he was arrested and sentenced to thirty years in prison. Six years later, the USSR's regard for Fisher was evidenced when they insisted on swapping him for the stricken Powers. The trade was negotiated by New York lawyer James Donovan, and Abel and Powers's story is dramatized in the Steven Spielberg film *Bridge of Spies*.

Tracing that story from the most unlikely of beginnings in Newcastle, to Moscow and beyond to the streets of New York, *Abel* is a singular and absorbing true story of Cold War espionage to rival anything in fiction.

Vin Arthey is a writer and researcher.

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