



## Bridge of Spies

By Giles Whittell

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**The dramatic events behind the Oscar-winning film, *Bridge of Spies*, tracing the paths leading to the first and most legendary prisoner exchange between East and West at Berlin's Glienicke Bridge and Checkpoint Charlie on February 10, 1962.**

*Bridge of Spies* is the true story of three extraordinary characters whose fate helped to define the conflicts and lethal undercurrents of the most dangerous years of the Cold War: William Fisher, alias Rudolf Abel, a British born KGB agent arrested by the FBI in New York City and jailed as a Soviet superspy for trying to steal America's most precious nuclear secrets; Gary Powers, the American U-2 pilot who was captured when his plane was shot down while flying a reconnaissance mission over the closed cities of central Russia; and Frederic Pryor, a young American graduate student in Berlin mistakenly identified as a spy, arrested and held without charge by the Stasi, East Germany's secret police. The three men were rescued against daunting odds, and then all but forgotten. Yet they laid bare the pathological mistrust that fueled the arms race for the next 30 years.

Weaving the three strands of this story together for the first time, Giles Whittell masterfully portrays the intense political tensions and nuclear brinkmanship that brought the United States and Soviet Union so close to a hot war in the early 1960s. He reveals the dramatic lives of men drawn into the nadir of the Cold War by duty and curiosity, and the tragicomedy of errors that eventually induced Nikita Khrushchev to send missiles to Fidel Castro.

Drawing on new interviews conducted in the United States, Europe and Russia with key players in the exchange and the events leading to it, among them Frederic Pryor himself and the man who shot down Gary Powers, *Bridge of Spies* captures a time when the fate of the world really did depend on coded messages on microdots and brave young men in pressure suits. The exchange that frigid day at two of the most sensitive points along the Iron Curtain represented the first step back from where the superpowers had stood since the building of the Berlin Wall the previous summer--on the brink of World War III.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Riveting, meticulously researched and beautifully written, *Bridge of Spies* unlocks one of the most fascinating espionage mysteries of the Cold War" - **Ben Macintyre, author of *Operation Mincemeat***

### About the Author

**Giles Whittell** is a writer for the *Times of London*. He has been the *Times*' correspondent in Moscow and Los Angeles and the Washington, DC bureau chief, and has written four previous books including two about the break-up of the Soviet empire.

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*I*

### THE WATERSPOUT

Shock and awe was not invented for Saddam Hussein. It was invented for Joseph Stalin, and it worked pretty well.

On July 24, 1946, as most of Russia slept, a team of U.S. Navy frogmen guided a heavy steel container to its final resting place in the clear waters of Bikini Lagoon, 2,500 miles west of Honolulu. They stabilized it with cables ninety feet below an anchored amphibious assault ship that gloried in the name *LSM-60*. The container was made from the conning tower of the *USS Salmon*, a scrapped navy submarine, and inside it was a working replica of the plutonium bomb that had killed eighty thousand people at Nagasaki the previous year. That evening, on a support vessel outside the lagoon, the frogmen ate T-bone steaks with all the trimmings.

Around the *LSM-60*, like giant moon shadows on the water's calm surface, a target fleet of eighty-five more ships spent that night emptied of crew and supplies, with no role left except to sink. One of the closest to the bomb was the *USS Arkansas*, a 27,000-ton battleship that had carried President Taft to Panama before the First World War and bombarded Cherbourg and Iwo Jima in the Second. For most of her life the only way for a battleship to go down had been with guns blazing, but the nuclear age had changed that. It turned out that with the help of an atom bomb a battleship could go down like a toy in a bath. It could be flicked onto its bow and rammed into the seabed so that its superstructure fell off as if never even bolted on.

Shortly after breakfast time on the morning of the twenty-fifth, the *Arkansas* was photographed from every angle as the bomb in the steel container was detonated 170 yards from her hull. Cameras in a B-29 bomber twenty-five thousand feet above the lagoon and a little to the south captured the sight of a huge disc of ocean turning white in an instant. That was the water beneath the *Arkansas* being vaporized.

The shockwave from the initial blast rolled the ship onto her side and ripped off her propellers. A six-thousand-foot column of spray and water, created in about two and a half seconds, then heaved her into a vertical position in which two thirds of her length were clearly visible ten miles away, dwarfed by the largest man-made waterspout in history. She has lain upside down on the floor of the lagoon ever since.

The *Arkansas* was one of ten ships sunk outright by what came to be known as the Baker shot. It was the second of two nuclear tests conducted at Bikini with undisguised panache as the world adjusted to an

awesome new technology (and to the daring swimsuit it inspired; the first-ever bikini, presented in Paris that month, was called *l'atome*, and the second was a buttock-baring thong described by one fashion writer as what the survivor of a nuclear blast could expect to be wearing as the fireball subsided).

Participation in the tests by U.S. military personnel was voluntary but popular. In shirtsleeves and sunglasses, 37,000 men extended their wartime service for a year to help set up the tests and to see for themselves the power of the weapon that had brought Japan to its knees.

Pat Bradley was there, up a tree with a movie camera on Bikini atoll to film the blast and the tsunami it produced—a single ninety-foot wave that subsided before it hit the island, then three smaller waves. “It took a couple of minutes before the first wave came in to the atoll,” he remembered. “The second came in higher, then the third completely covered the island four to six feet deep.”

A lean and thoughtful young air force captain named Stan Beerli was there too. He had survived the world war in B-17 bombers over Italy and would survive the cold war in the regulation dark suit of the CIA. His tasks would include trying to keep Gary Powers and the U-2 in the shadows where they belonged, but for the time being the cold war was pure spectacle.

The foreign and domestic press were welcome at Bikini. The Baker shot was witnessed by 131 reporters, including a full Soviet contingent. With Warner Bros.’ help, the Pentagon released a propaganda film of the blast for anyone who had missed the initial coverage, and Admiral William “Spike” Blandy, who oversaw the operation, posed with his wife cutting an angel food cake in the shape of a mushroom cloud.

Responding to public anxiety before the blast, Blandy promised that he was “not an atomic playboy” and that the bomb would not “blow out the bottom of the sea and let all the water run down the hole.” This was true, but it could still do a lot of damage. In the summer of 1947 *Life* magazine published a long article based on official studies of the intense radioactive fallout from the Baker bomb. It concluded that if a similar weapon were to explode off the tip of Manhattan in a stiff southerly wind, two million people would die.

America had finished the war with a pair of atom bombs and started the peace in the same way. President Truman’s message to Stalin could not have been clearer if written in blood. It was a warning not to contemplate starting a new war in Europe trusting in the Red Army’s old-fashioned strength in numbers. And it signaled more concisely than any speech that Truman had accepted the central argument of George Kennan’s famous “Long Telegram,” sent from the U.S. embassy in Moscow six months before the tests: the Soviet Union had to be contained. As Truman himself put it: “If we could just have Stalin and his boys see one of these things, there wouldn’t be any question about another war.”

Stalin refused to be intimidated. He had not sacrificed twenty million people to defeat Fascism only to be told where to set the limits on Stalinism. And yet he had a problem.

At the time of the Bikini tests, the Soviet Union was still three years and a month from exploding its first nuclear weapon. Its efforts to build one were under way on a bend in the Shagan River in eastern Kazakhstan, under the direction of a bearded young hero of Soviet science (and tightly closeted homosexual) named Igor Kurchatov. Stalin had deemed the bomb “Problem Number One.” He had created a special state committee to ensure that no expense was spared in solving it. Whole mountains in Bulgaria had been commandeered to give Kurchatov the uranium he needed. But Kurchatov was not an innovator. He was a nuclear plagiarist, almost completely dependent on intelligence from left-leaning scientists in the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos. As he admitted in a 1943 memo to the Council of People’s Commissars, this flow of intelligence had “immense, indeed incalculable importance for our State and science”—but in 1946 the flow

had slowed suddenly to a trickle.

Just a year earlier, not one but two descriptions of the first bomb tested at Los Alamos were in the Kremlin nearly two weeks before it even exploded. After that test, more detailed diagrams of the device reached Moscow than were provided in the first official nuclear report to Congress. One was smuggled out of Albuquerque in a box of Kleenex. Atomic espionage was never more bountiful than this. But on November 7, 1945, Elizabeth Terrill Bentley, a thirty-seven-year-old graduate of Vassar and a paid-up Soviet agent, went to the FBI with a 107-page description of Soviet intelligence activities in North America. The following day J. Edgar Hoover sent a secret memo to the White House based on Bentley's material. It produced few arrests because she offered scant supporting evidence, but her defection forced Moscow to shut down most of the channels feeding nuclear secrets to Kurchatov.

There were other reasons why Soviet espionage in the United States was grinding to a halt. Victory in the war had removed the most compelling reason for scientists at Los Alamos to share designs with their former Soviet allies—the defeat of Nazism. And the U.S. Army had at last begun decoding encrypted Soviet cable traffic, code-named Venona, that corroborated many of Bentley's allegations.

Without vital intelligence from the true pioneers of nuclear fission in New Mexico, Kurchatov would not be able to complete the bomb. Without the bomb, the most that the Soviet empire could hope to do was defend its interminable frontiers. As the Bikini lagoon erupted, the outlook for international Communism looked bleak indeed. Yet from the bowels of the Lyubianka—headquarters of the KGB and the true engine room of the revolution—there came a glimmer of hope.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Tiara Garcia:**

The book untitled Bridge of Spies is the guide that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the e-book content that will be shown to you actually. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The copy writer was did a lot of analysis when write the book, therefore the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of Bridge of Spies from the publisher to make you far more enjoy free time.

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