**Soviet Spy Scandal**

*News of a widespread spy ring in Canada cools relations with the Soviet Union*

In September 1945, a young Russian man symbolically ushered in the Cold War when he walked into Ottawa newsroom and announced he had proof of a widespread Soviet spy ring operating in Canada.

"It's war. It's Russia," he told the night editor of the Ottawa Journal.

Hitler's fascist forces had just been defeated in the Second World War. And the Soviet Union had been an ally to the West during the war. But this event would help fuel anti-Communist sentiments throughout the western world.

The man who touched off the political crisis was Igor Gouzenko. Gouzenko had spent part of the Second World War at the Soviet Embassy in Canada, as a cipher clerk, encoding communications to Moscow.

In 1945, Gouzenko received orders to return to the Soviet Union, but disillusioned with his communist homeland and attracted by life in the West, he decided to stay.

He plotted his escape for several weeks, stealing classified material that he could use to ingratiate himself with his Canadian hosts.

"During the course of about half a month, I examined the materials so as to select the best ones that would disclose the operative work, leaving the informational telegrams on one side," he wrote, "the telegrams which I wished to take out I marked by bending over slightly one of the corners."

The information revealed a spy ring had operated in Canada during the war. It involved civil servants, scientists, even a Member of Parliament. The Soviets were trying to get information about North American technology including the atom bomb.
On September 5, 1945, Gouzenko stuffed 109 documents under his shirt and walked to the newsroom of the Ottawa Journal. He confronted the night editor, Chester Frowde.

"The first words he spoke were: 'It’s war. It’s Russia'. Well, that didn’t ring a bell with me because World War II was over and we were not at war with Russia."

The editor told him to go to the police, but Gouzenko went to the Department of Justice instead, which was closed. The next morning, he went back to the Journal and spoke to reporter Elizabeth Fraser.

By noon, the Canadian government was aware of Gouzenko and Mackenzie King was informed of the incident.

Canada was about to meet with the Soviets, Britain, France and the United States to discuss and construct a post-war peace, and King was worried that this scandal would damage international relations.

"It was like a bomb on top of everything else," King wrote, "and one could not say how serious it might be or where it might lead."

Later that day Gouzenko applied for Canadian citizenship, then wandered around Ottawa, unsuccessfully seeking asylum. At that point, the Canadian government was unclear how to act on the unfolding developments. But the Soviets were now aware of the theft and were looking for Gouzenko.

That night, Gouzenko and his family stayed with a neighbour. Just before midnight four men from the Soviet embassy broke into the apartment searching for Gouzenko and his documents. The Ottawa police quickly arrived, followed by the RCMP* and staff from External Affairs.

The Canadian government finally offered Gouzenko and his family the asylum he sought.

His story remained secret for five months while an investigation was conducted into the activities of suspected spies named in the documents, most of them civil servants. In February 1946, arrests were made.

Israel Halperin, a mathematician who did military research, was arrested and detained for five weeks without charge, and questioned by a Royal Commission, not knowing whether he was a suspect or a witness.
Twenty people were eventually sent to trial. Nine were acquitted**, including Dr. Halperin. Fred Rose, a Communist Member of Parliament, was convicted of spying for the Soviets, and sentenced to six years. All spent the rest of their lives under suspicion, their reputations tarnished.

The Gouzenko spy scandal reverberated throughout the world. In the United States as in Canada, there was heightened suspicion and paranoia of communist spies. A more lasting legacy of Gouzenko's revelations was an increased distrust between the Soviet Union and the West, helping ignite the Cold War.

Gouzenko and his family were given a new identity. In 1948, he wrote his memoirs entitled *This Was My Choice*. Gouzenko occasionally emerged in the public spotlight, but he always wore a hood over his face to conceal his identity. He died in 1982.

[http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP15CH1PA1LE.html](http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP15CH1PA1LE.html)

*RCMP= Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
**acquitted=when the accused is free from the charge of an offense
Julius Rosenberg was arrested in July 1950, a few weeks after the Korean War began. He was executed, along with his wife, Ethel, on June 19, 1953, a few weeks before it ended. The legal charge of which the Rosenbergs were convicted was vague: “Conspiracy to Commit Espionage.” But in a practical sense they were held accountable for giving the so-called “secret of the atomic bomb” to the USSR.

The Rosenbergs’ trial took place in March 1951. Federal Judge Irving R. Kaufman pronounced the death sentence in early April. The Rosenbergs’ attorneys worked for over two years to have the verdict overturned. They appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court nine times, but the Court refused to review the record. Neither President Truman nor President Eisenhower granted their requests for clemency.

Because the charge was conspiracy, the Rosenbergs’ conviction required no tangible evidence that they had stolen anything or given it to anybody. The key government witnesses – (Ethel’s brother and sister-in-law, David and Ruth Greenglass) – were charged with the same conspiracy and received more favorable treatment in return for testifying that the Rosenbergs were guilty.

The Greenglasses testified that Julius, with Ethel’s help, recruited David into an atomic spy ring in 1944 while David worked as a machinist at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, where the first atomic bomb was being built. On the stand in the Rosenbergs’ trial, the Greenglasses swore that David provided a sketch and an accompanying theoretical description of the bomb, to Julius Rosenberg in September 1945, and that Ethel was present and typed up David’s notes. In return for their cooperation, David received a sentence of 15 years in prison and served 10 before being released; and Ruth Greenglass, who testified that she helped steal what the prosecution called “the most important scientific secret ever known to mankind,” was never even indicted*.

During the trial, David Greenglass also testified that he gave another set of sketches to Harry Gold, who used the recognition signal “I come from Julius” to identify himself to David when they first met. Gold testified that he was a spy courier transmitting information from atomic scientist Klaus Fuchs to the Soviet Union, but that on this one occasion he received information from Greenglass.

FBI documents first made public in the late 1970’s show that David Greenglass originally claimed Gold identified himself as “Dave from Pittsburgh,” while Gold first said he identified
himself to Greenglass as “Ben from Brooklyn.” One FBI file shows that after several months in prison, but before the trial, prosecutors brought Gold and Greenglass together to iron out this discrepancy. It was at that meeting that Gold and Greenglass suddenly “remembered” the name “Julius” in the recognition signal.

The Rosenbergs testified in their own defense at their trial and denied all charges. They invoked their Fifth Amendment rights and refused to answer repeated prosecution questions about their political affiliations. During the McCarthy period, many felt that such a refusal to answer was an admission of Communist Party membership and that all Communists were spies for the Soviet Union.

Following the three week trial, both Rosenbergs were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage**, as was their co-defendant Morton Sobell. Sobell received a 30-year sentence while the Rosenbergs were given the death penalty. Judge Kaufman justified the death sentence as follows: “I consider your crimes worse than murder…. I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb has already caused, in my opinion, the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding fifty thousand and who knows how many millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason.” He concluded that the Rosenbergs’ “[l]ove for their cause dominated their lives – it was even greater than their love for their children.”

Despite Kaufman’s assertion about the supposed value of the information the Rosenbergs allegedly passed to the Soviets, a chorus of leading scientists including Harold Urey and J. Robert Oppenheimer stated that there was no “secret” of the Atomic Bomb. Years later, many Atomic scientists agreed with a colleague’s assessment that the Greenglass material was, “too incomplete, ambiguous and even incorrect to be of any service or value to the Russians in shortening the time required to develop their nuclear bombs.”

http://www.rfc.org/caseoverview

*indicted=formally accuse of or charge with a serious crime

**espionage=spying in order to obtain political and military information
McCarthyism

McCarthyism, name given to the period of time in American history that saw Wisconsin Sen. Joseph McCarthy produce a series of investigations and hearings during the 1950s in an effort to expose supposed communist infiltration of various areas of the U.S. government. The term has since become a byname for defamation* of character or reputation by means of widely publicized indiscriminate** allegations, especially on the basis of unsubstantiated charges.

McCarthy was elected to the Senate in 1946 and rose to prominence in 1950 when he claimed in a speech that 205 communists had infiltrated the State Department. McCarthy’s subsequent search for communists in the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, and elsewhere made him an incredibly polarizing figure. After McCarthy’s reelection in 1952, he obtained
the chairmanship of the Committee on Government Operations of the Senate and of its Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. For the next two years he was constantly in the spotlight, investigating various government departments and questioning innumerable witnesses about their suspected communist affiliations. Although he failed to make a plausible case against anyone, his colourful and cleverly presented accusations drove some persons out of their jobs and brought popular condemnation to others.

McCarthyism both reached its peak and began its decline during the “McCarthy hearings”: 36 days of televised investigative hearings led by McCarthy in 1954. After first calling hearings to investigate possible espionage*** at the Army Signal Corps Engineering Laboratories in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the junior senator turned his communist-chasing committee’s attention to an altogether different matter, the question of whether the Army had promoted a dentist who had refused to answer questions for the Loyalty Security Screening Board. The hearings reached their climax when McCarthy suggested that the Army’s lawyer, Joseph Welch, had employed a man who at one time had belonged to a communist front group. Welch’s rebuke to the senator—“Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?”—discredited McCarthy and helped to turn the tide of public opinion against him. Moreover, McCarthy was also eventually undermined significantly by the incisive and skillful criticism of a journalist, Edward R. Murrow. Murrow’s devastating television editorial about McCarthy, carried out on his show, See It Now, cemented him as the premier journalist of the time. McCarthy was censured for his conduct by the Senate, and in 1957 he died. While McCarthyism proper ended with the Senator’s downfall, the term still has currency in modern political discourse.

*defamation=harming a good reputation

**indiscriminate=done at random or without careful judgment

***espionage=spying in order to obtain political and military information
The Red Scare

**Directions:** Read each of the three articles mentioned below, answering the questions connected to each article.

Answer the following questions from “Soviet Spy Scandal”

1. What did Igor Gouzenko reveal to Canadian authorities in 1945?

2. How did Igor Gouzenko learn this information?

3. How did this news generally affect people in Canada and the United States?

4. What does it mean to offer asylum to somebody?

Answer these questions from “Rosenberg Case Overview.”

5. What are first the names of the Rosenbergs who are addressed in this article? What is their relation to one another?

6. Describe the accusations and the result of the case against the Rosenbergs in 3-4 sentences.

7. Based solely on what you know from this article, do you believe the Rosenbergs were innocent or guilty? Why?
Answer these questions from “McCarthyism.”

8. Explain “McCarthyism” in your own words.

9. Who was investigated as part of Senator McCarthy’s claims?

10. What result did McCarthyism have on those who were investigated?

11. How might something like McCarthyism rise in our day?