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This image depicts an exchange of spies, between East and West, on the Glienicke Bridge. Because it was the only place which had Western-control on one end (the American-controlled sector of Berlin) and Eastern-control (Potsdam, East Germany) on the other end, this "Bridge of Spies" was an ideal location. Image, by an unnamed photographer, online via Russian-language websites.

With a cold fog descending on Berlin that Saturday morning - February 10, 1962 - people took their places on the Glienicke Bridge. No news reporters would be allowed to witness the event.

Although the Soviets didn't want to call what was about to happen an "exchange," that's what it was.

Wolfgang Vogel accompanied Frederick Pryor to a place near Checkpoint Charlie. As soon as Pryor was back in US-controlled territory, somebody would use the two-way radio to notify the Americans waiting at Glienicke Bridge. Only then would Abel and Powers begin their walks across the bridge.

Abel and Donovan had met privately earlier that morning. They realized it would likely be the last time they would ever see each other.

Both Abel and Powers waited at their respective ends of the bridge, each holding overstuffed travel bags. At 8:45 AM local time, someone on the American side shouted:

Pryor's been released!

With an official pardon in his possession, Rudolf was ready to cross the bridge. He and Donovan shook hands:

"Goodbye, Jim."

"Good luck, Rudolf." (See *Strangers on a Bridge*, by James Donovan, at page 423.)

In the car, heading toward Berlin's Tempelhof Airport, Jim Donovan met Francis Gary Powers:

...I was introduced to Powers, who seemed dazed. (*Strangers*, at 423.)

After the group cleared East-German airspace, they landed - and switched planes - in Frankfurt. Flying back to the States, Donovan and Powers had a chance to debrief.

Life hadn't been easy for Powers. Interrogated again and again and again - sometimes in the middle of the night - his situation sounded like events from the Moscow Show Trials of the 1930s (which Arthur Koestler describes in his book *Darkness at Noon*).

Arriving back in the States, Powers had an appointment with officials at an airbase in the Carolinas. There he would debrief military and intelligence officials about what happened to him and his plane.

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Media Stream



Glienicke Bridge Where Spies Were Exchanged

This image depicts the Glienicke Bridge—also known as the "Bridge of Spies"—where Eastern powers and Western powers exchanged spies during the Cold-War era.

The exchange of Rudolf Abel (a Soviet spy whose real name was William "Willy" Fisher) for Francis Gary Powers (a U-2 pilot flying a reconnaissance mission over Soviet territory on behalf of the CIA) took place on February 10, 1962. This image reportedly depicts a scene from that event.

Before the two men were actually exchanged, officials from both sides met in the middle of the bridge.

When it was time for the actual release of Abel (Fisher) and Powers, they crossed the bridge, from their respective sides, passing each other as they walked toward their side of the border.

As later reported by both James Donovan and Rudolf Abel, the men did not look at each other as they made their way across the bridge.

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