

This video, by the U.S. Department of Defense, takes us through the life of Rudolf Abel (Willy Fisher) while he was living in Brooklyn as an undetected Soviet spy.

The informative documentary is a bit longer than 14 minutes. This guide will help you to move the video forward to see key parts of the story:

4:36 - The story starts with the strange case of the Hollow Nickel. We learn, later, what this has to do with Goldfus / Abel. At this point in the story, no one in America realizes that the real name of this spy is William ("Willy") Fisher. No one will know this for many years to come.

6:10 - Abel (Fisher) lived at 252 Fulton Street. He had a studio apartment which he rented in the name of Emil Goldfus.

7:01 - Goldfus / Abel is apprehended on August 7, 1957. After he was arrested, he revealed that his real name was Rudolf Ivanovich Abel. That was an untrue statement.

7:35 - U.S. officials report this arrest is "the most important Soviet spy ever caught in the United States." Abel is charged with being an active spy over a period of nine years.

7:57 - The FBI investigated his apartment's contents and his nearby photographic/artist studio.

8:12 - Agents found microfilm and a short-wave radio set in Abel's flat.

8:20 - Agents also found hollowed-out pencils containing film and numerous cryptic messages.

8:34 - Agents also found hollowed-out bolts and nails to transmit what they believe are defense secrets.

8:40 - Abel even had hollowed cufflinks in his apartment.

8:52 - Abel had rented a safe deposit box at Manufacturers Trust Company, a NYC bank. FBI agents found \$15,000 in cash in that box. Abel also had \$6,000 on his person when he was arrested.

9:25 - Jim Donovan - the Brooklyn-based attorney retained to defend Abel in his upcoming espionage trial - talks about his client's defense at a press conference. He says: "It [Abel's case] should be sharply distinguished from such a case as that of the Rosenbergs who were charged with betraying their own country. Assuming the charges in this indictment are true, Abel is quite evidently not only a man who has performed an exceedingly hazardous mission for his own country..."

In short ... Abel was an admitted professional spy and had conducted himself within the code of that profession.

Abel did not testify at trial and Donovan presented no defense witnesses.

The U.S. Attorney offered several witnesses to make his case against Abel. He showed Abel to be an active participant in the KGB who operated directly under the USSR Council of Ministers in Moscow.

Among other things, the prosecutor said: "The KGB serves as a worldwide collector of information. In each country, a number of independent spy cells pass information directly into the apparatus. Members of one spy cell do not know of agents in other rings."

11:07 - "Through newspapers, radio and television [then still in its infancy], the eyes and ears of a perplexed, troubled American people were on this courthouse [in Brooklyn]." Then on November 15, 1957, came the verdict. The jury found Colonel Abel guilty as charged.

11:23 - The US Attorney said: "I believe that the jury verdict in this case was more than amply warranted by the evidence which I feel was overwhelming and which strikes a very, very severe blow at Soviet espionage in this country."

11:35 - Colonel Abel was sentenced to thirty years in prison.

11:44 - "How many secrets passed from Colonel Abel to the Soviet Union is not-yet publicly known, but this is clear: Abel and his Russian confederates were basically intermediaries who collected their information from Americans in a position to know our defense secrets. Colonel Abel was the leader of only one Soviet spy network in the United States."

12:15 - "Industrial and technical workers were Abel's major target. Abel did not refute the evidence that espionage meetings, where transfer of information had been held in such important industrial centers as

Quincy, Massachusetts, Long Island, NY, Newark, NJ and New York City [took place].”

12:43 - “Targets for the Colonel Abels [of the world] are Americans who work daily at building-up America’s military strength. Very few of these men and women convey secrets willingly to the Russian collectors of information. Carelessness eases the job of the professional spies like Colonel Rudolph Ivanovich Abel. And somewhere in this country, right now, trained agents just as clever, just as inconspicuous, possessing large amounts of money and the most-refined tools of espionage are going on with Colonel Abel’s job. These men are hard-working, dedicated to their cause and will stop at nothing to get their hands on classified information. The Department of Defense security program is designed to defeat their efforts. By complying with these requirements, you will live up to your security obligations and thereby aid your country.”

“Whether Colonel Abel’s successors succeed or fail is strictly up to you.”

This video was prepared, in 1958, for the U.S. Department of Defense by the Army Pictorial Center.

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