Soviet Spy Born, Bred In England

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MOSCOW, Aug. 21 (AP)—It has come to light that Col. Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, the Soviet master spy whose impeccable English and intimate knowledge of Western ways helped him melt into American life for almost nine years, was born and raised in England.

It also turns out that his father was an old Bolshevik and an associate of Lenin.

Abel, who used a number of aliases, was born William Fisher on July 11, 1903.

The new information about Abel's origin came out after some Western newsmen stumbled upon his grave marker in a Moscow cemetery. His white marble tombstone carries two names, engraved and painted in gold: "Fisher, William Genrykovich-Abel, Rudolf Ivanovich." It says he was born July 11, 1903, and died Nov. 15, 1971.

Two smaller stones to the left of Abel's marker give the names of his father, Genrykh Matveyevich Fisher, and his mother, Lubov Vasilevna Fisher.

Abel was arrested in New York for espionage in 1957, tried and sentenced 30 years in prison. He was returned to the Soviet Union in 1962, in exchange for U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, went into semi-retirement and died of lung cancer in the fall of 1971.

A reliable unofficial source said shortly after Abel's death that the spy was born and raised in England with the name of Fisher and that his father was a labor leader there. But there was no way to check the story at the time.

The tombstone confirmed the name Fisher, and a Soviet encyclopedia confirmed that Genrykh Fisher was living in England at the time of William's birth. The reference work said the elder Fisher was born in St. Petersburg in 1871, became a revolutionary and associate of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, was banished under the czar to three years in exile near Archangelsk and emigrated to England in 1901. There, he joined the newly formed Communist party and came back to Russia in 1921 after the revolution and became a Bolshevik party worker.