

# L.I. Spy Tells of Serving Soviet



The New York Times (by Neal Boenzi)

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Glenn Thompson as they arrived at the United States Court House yesterday in Brooklyn.

## Thompson Switches Plea to Guilty—Trained by Reds

By RONALD MAIORANA

Robert Glenn Thompson, a former Air Force enlisted man who pleaded not guilty on Jan. 7 to charges of having been a spy for the Soviet Union, changed his plea to guilty yesterday.

The change of plea confirmed an unpublished interview that Thompson gave to The New York Times on Jan. 18. At that time he told how, as one of thousands of military personnel stationed in West Berlin, he crossed into the Soviet sector in the summer of 1957 and asked for political asylum.

Thompson's appearance before Judge Leo Rayfiel in the United States Court House in Brooklyn was without the fanfare that accompanied his last appearance.

The court was almost empty yesterday as Thompson, apparently at ease and dressed in a brown suit, with shoes and tie to match, and a white shirt, sat in the rear of the room.

Last January the 30-year-old resident of Bay Shore, L. I., surrounded by the curious, appeared in court in a blue sleeveless sweater, a greenish shirt open at the neck, loose trousers to match and heavy work shoes.

Thompson rose quickly yesterday when his name was called, glanced at his wife, Evelyn, who was sitting next to him, and strode to the bench

Continued on Page 25, Column 1

accompanied by his lawyer, Sidney Siben of Bay Shore, to change his plea.

He clasped his hands tightly behind his back as the clerk of the court read the count of espionage, starting:

"That from in or about June, 1957, and continuously thereafter . . ."

"I plead guilty," Thompson said in a soft voice at the conclusion of the reading. Judge Rayfiel continued him in bail of \$15,000 and set May 13 for sentencing.

Outside the court Mr. Siben said that Thompson had pleaded guilty after discussing the situation with his wife.

"I want to take what I've got coming to me," Thompson said. "It's the best thing to do. I've got my children to think about. I made a bad mistake. But remember, I was very young—only 22."

Mr. Siben said that Thompson's "real mistake was not consulting a lawyer" prior to his arrest by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"If he had, I could have given him the proper advice," Mr. Siben said. "But my investigation of this case reveals that there is not much chance of trying a case and winning it. I've advised him to throw himself on the mercy of the court."

On Jan. 8, the day after his indictment and original pleading, Thompson denied vigorously that he had served as a spy for the Soviet Union. In the interview he granted to The Times, on the basis that it was to be held until he went into court to change his plea, Thompson said that he made the denial because he did not believe that his activities had damaged the security of the United States.

In general, the story told by Thompson followed the lines, with additional details, of the specific charges against him in the first count of the three-count felony indictment. However, there was no way of substantiating his story, and United States Attorney Joseph P. Hoey refused yesterday to comment on any aspects of it.

### 2 Counts Still Denied

Thompson continued his plea of not guilty to the second and third counts of the indictment, including charges that he failed to register with the State Department as an agent of a foreign country and that he acted as a co-conspirator with agents of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Hoey said that in cases involving espionage "the practice is to drop or dismiss" the other counts in the indictment.

In his story Thompson said that the tortuous trail he followed as an espionage agent wound from Germany to a resort area on the Black Sea in the Soviet Union—where he said he was trained as an espionage agent—to Montana, Detroit and Long Island. It was marked by clandestine meetings with Soviet agents, the use of secret writing paper, short-wave radios and passwords.

Thompson, a tall, heavy-set man with long brown hair, was interviewed in the office of Mr. Siben. Thompson held an unlighted cigar, which he alter-

nately chewed on and waded in the air while talking. He appeared to be tense and often made noticeable efforts to sit back in a leather chair to appear at ease.

#### In charge of Files

Three years after he joined the Air Force, Thompson said, he was assigned to a unit of the Office of Special Investigation in West Berlin.

He was put in charge of the investigation unit's file room, he said. The files contained secret information covering the activities of counterintelligence agents working for Western powers in East Germany, according to Thompson.

"I had no idea why I drew the assignment," he said. "I had no previous training for the job, and I wasn't even a high school grad."

In the months following his arrival in West Berlin, Thompson said, he grew "disillusioned" with the methods used by the United States Government to lure East and West Germans into elaborate counter intelligence operations.

Meanwhile Thompson met and married a West German girl. After being court-martialed in December, 1956, for losing a gun, Thompson was told that he would have to send his wife to the United States. He was demoted from airman first class to airman second class and fined. He returned to work in the O.S.I. office.

"I was bitter about having to send Evelyn and our baby home to live in Detroit," he said. "But I had to do it. After my wife left I was very lonely and disgusted and bitter."

#### Tells of Mental Distress

"I'd go from one day to the next not talking to anybody or seeing anybody. I was looking for a way to occupy my mind; so I started to count the holes in the [office] ceiling tiles. On most count I got 11,871 holes. Sometimes I'd get a different count, more or less, and I'd start to count all over again."

"About this time I got involved with another girl, a West German. I'm not going into details, but I've since told my wife all about her."

Mrs. Thompson, who sat a few feet away during the interview, looked down at the floor. The left corner of her mouth trembled, and she reached for a cigarette.

"On this one particular day [my] colonel was really down on me," Thompson said. "He was yelling about my being in civilian clothes and needing a shave. I blew my stack and said to hell with him and left."

"I went back to the barracks, shaved and had a few drinks. Then I decided to get even with him [the colonel]. I walked over into East Berlin and asked for political asylum."

Thompson was taken to Soviet agents, he said, and interrogated at great length.

"They said they wouldn't accept me for asylum, because they thought I had been sent in as a counter-spy," he said. "They let me stay overnight and sent me back the next day."

"A few nights later I was walking along the street, and a limousine pulled up alongside me. Somebody called my name and told me to get into the car."

One of the men was somebody named Steven, who had questioned me in East Germany."

Thompson said that he was taken back to East Germany and questioned again.

"They had photographed me and all my identification papers the first time I spoke to them," he recalled. "They said if I did work with them, they would expose me to the authorities in West Berlin."

Thompson said that he was "afraid" to refuse to cooperate.

#### Tells of Coercion

"There was something else," he said. "They knew all about my wife and that she had grandparents and some aunts, uncles and cousins living in the Eastern Zone. They said that I better cooperate, or else."

"I agreed to work for them," Thompson said. "They gave me \$12.50 and a miniature camera to photograph secret documents."

"I didn't photograph anything at first. But then I started, because my colonial was harassing me and I wanted to get even with him."

"I shot one or two rolls of film, each roll had 50 shots on it, and slipped them into the lining of my European sports coat. I got them into East Germany with no trouble."

Thompson said that his "handlers" in East Berlin did not comment much at first on the documents he was photographing.

"I photographed investigations we had undertaken on people and occasionally the Berlin police blotter," he said.

"Sometimes I photographed reports on essential elements of information clipped from newspapers and magazines and political and economic information that had nothing to do with the defense of the United States."

"I was selective and didn't photograph anything that would hurt the United States."

"I gave them 50 to 100 documents every two weeks for about three months," Thompson said. "Once in a while they'd give me money, usually \$12.50."

"Let's face it. I wasn't in this for the money. I was disgusted, and it was part of my plan to get revenge."

"They gave me a password. It was a question and answer. The question was: 'Are you from Toledo, Ohio?' The answer I was supposed to give was: 'Yes, since June 23, 1932.'"

"Another thing they gave me was secret writing paper. I was supposed to use a stylus to write an invisible message in code. I'd write a cover letter over the invisible message and send it off to an address in Helsinki, Finland."

"Oh yeah—another thing they gave me was a flashlight containing a battery that came apart. It contained equipment to photograph an eight-and-a-half-by-ten sheet of paper into a dot as big as a period at the end of a sentence."

Thompson said that he was instructed to insert the dot between a split postcard, reglue the card and mail it to Helsinki.

#### Trained in Soviet

Sometime before leaving West Germany, Thompson said, the Soviet asked him to obtain a five-day pass. He did so, crossed into East Berlin and was taken by automobile and an airplane

to the resort area on the Black Sea.

"I don't remember the name of the place," he said. "I was there for five days. In that time they trained me in the use of radio equipment and the [Russian] language, so that I'd be able to read ciphers."

He said that the Soviet agents asked him to imbed a radio transmitter in a wall of the O.S.I. office on his return to West Berlin.

"At first I didn't want to do it," he said. "Later I changed my mind and put the transmitter in one of the walls."

Thompson said that he was reassigned to the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Mont.

"I had one written contact with the Soviets [at Malmstrom]. I used the secret paper to tell them where I was stationed. But I never kept that meeting in Canada," Thompson said, adding:

"Neither did I use any of the other equipment they gave me, because by that time I realized I had made a terrible mistake and I just wanted to get away from them."

Thompson said that at one point in Montana he considered suicide.

"I went to a motel in Billings," he said. "I was going to kill myself, blow out my brains with a shotgun—honest. But I didn't have the courage, I suppose."

Thompson's tour of duty in West Berlin came to an end in January, 1958, although he still had another year to serve.

"When I told them that I was being reassigned to the States, they got shook up and excited," he said. "They calmed down after awhile and said they'd arrange for me to meet one of their agents in Canada, in Smith Falls, Ontario, in front of a movie house at 1 P.M. on the first Sunday of any month."

#### Code Provided

"They gave me \$1,000 and told me to buy a short-wave radio and tune in on a special part of the band and listen for the code words 'Amour Lenin.' The code was followed by a series of messages, also in code."

"They also gave me a distinctive cigarette lighter. It had four playing cards on it, all aces. They said my contact in Canada would have a matching lighter."

Thompson, who was assigned as a clerk-typist at Malmstrom, said that he grew apprehensive that a Soviet agent would try to approach him with a demand for secret information.

"I volunteered for an assignment in Goose Bay, Labrador," he said. "When I got it, I sent my wife and children back to Detroit to stay with my mother. I was discharged from the service at Goose Bay at the end of 1958."

Thompson said that when he returned to Detroit, he learned that a man was looking for him. He later came to know him as John Kurlinsky, really Boris V. Karpovich, a counselor in the Soviet Embassy in Washington, he said. Karpovich was ordered to leave the United States after Thompson's indictment.

"He [Karpovich] wanted me to go back to the Air Force or the Army to get more informa-

tion," Thompson said. "One time he even asked me to get a job with the F.B.I. in Detroit. I stalled him."

Thompson said that he was not approached for almost two years, until the summer of 1961. A man he knew only as Gregor, but later identified as Fador Kudashkin, a one-time chief of the Russian section of verbatim reporters at the United Nations, came to his home in Detroit.

"He pressed me on getting information for them," Thompson said. "I told him I couldn't do it because I was unable to get jobs of a security nature."

#### Trailed to Long Island

Thompson said that he decided to get out of Detroit to escape further meetings with Soviet agents. He moved to Levittown, L. I., with his family and then to Copiague and later to Bay Shore.

"One day this Kudashkin showed up in front of my house in Copiague," Thompson said. "He said he had traced me from Detroit and had spent a couple of days driving around the neighborhood looking for a car with Michigan license plates. He seemed proud that he found me."

Thompson had subsequent meetings with Kudashkin in parks, near railroad stations and near a water reservoir. From time to time, he said, Kudashkin gave him money, about \$400 in all.

"He wanted me to supply in-

formation about water reservoirs on Long Island, on the gas lines between New York and Long Island, and on power plants in these areas," Thompson said. "He also wanted information about gas storage tanks in the area.

#### List of Names Investigated

"One time he gave me a list of names of people living in Nassau, Suffolk, Queens and New Jersey. These people are agents of the Soviet Union. Some are active, but most of them are sleepers. Kudashkin wanted information about where they lived, their jobs and their financial status.

"I helped him out with most of this information, because he wasn't looking for anything that involved the security of the country and that you and I don't know about as common knowledge."

Thompson said that he knew the F.B.I. was "on to me" after a meeting in Lynbrook about 15 months ago.

"Kudashkin gave me a radio to get messages on. Incidentally I never used it. As I was driving away from our meet place, I saw a black 1957 Chevrolet following me. There were two guys in it, and I knew the F.B.I. was onto me," he said with a faint smile.

Last July agents of the F.B.I. went to Thompson's house and asked him to report to their office in Babylon. He went willingly, he said, and met with them on 20 different occasions afterward.

"I told them everything I knew," Thompson said. "I gave them names, dates and places. Some of the sessions lasted seven, eight, nine, ten hours. The F.B.I. wanted me to go back into the service and work as a counterintelligence agent.

"They offered to buy my oil delivery business or run it for me while I was away. I almost went. But I have a wife and three kids. I just couldn't leave them and the business. Besides, I was afraid the Soviets would find out what I had done and kill me.