

Famed Lawyer For Spies Dead

NEW YORK (AP) — Dr. James B. Donovan, 53, the lawyer who set up the trade of a Soviet spy for U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers and arranged the ransom of prisoners taken by Cuba in the Bay of Pigs invasion, died early today.

He was a resident of Brooklyn and died in Methodist Hospital there.

The spy trade and prisoner release negotiations in the early 1960s were highlights of a career in which he also worked on the war crimes trials in Nuernberg and service with the U. S. Office of Scientific Research and Development, which supervised the development of the atomic bomb.

HE ALSO HAD a thriving private law career, was president of Pratt Institute and ran unsuccessfully for the U. S. Senate as a Democrat against Sen. Jacob K. Javits in 1962.

A spokesman at Pratt In-



JAMES B. DONOVAN

stitute said he died of heart failure.

Donovan's most celebrated case probably was that in which he defended the Soviet master spy, Col. Rudolph Abel, in 1957 and saved him from the death penalty. The

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Russian had lived for years in the United States, masquerading as an artist.

The court-appointed Donovan made the point during his defense that executing Abel might lead to Soviet refusal to exchange American spies held in Russia.

ABEL WAS sentenced to 30 years in prison, but five years later Donovan's prophesy was borne out when Abel was used to win Powers' freedom.

Powers' piloted U-2 spy plane was downed over the Soviet Union in 1960. His capture gave Premier Nikita Khrushchev the pretext for scrapping a summit meeting with President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Powers' father wrote Abel in prison to say he would seek U.S. government permission to try for an exchange. Meanwhile, Abel's wife wrote to Donovan asking about possible clemency for her husband.

PUTTING THE two together, Donovan got a Justice Department go-ahead to travel to East Berlin and "explore the situation."

The result: On Feb. 10, 1962, Abel and Powers passed each other to freedom across the east-west line in Berlin.

Donovan entered the negotiations to free 1,113 Bay of Pigs prisoners in 1962 when Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy suggested his name to the Cuban refugee committee whose earlier efforts to ransom the men failed because of Prime Minister Fidel Castro's hard demands.

NOT A SMALL part of his success, Donovan said, was taking his 18-year-old son, John, to Cuba with him as evidence of good faith.

"The boy played an important part in these negotiation," he said at the time. "Castro was enormously pleased to meet him and was completely taken by my self-confidence in bringing him."

A ransom of drugs and baby food finally was agreed upon. The first group of prisoners was released to return in exile in the United States in December, 1962, more than a year after the ill-fated invasion.

DONOVAN RESUMED his law practice but a short while later was bargaining again with Castro, this time winning the release of 27 Americans held by Cuba in exchange for four Cubans jailed here.

Born in New York City to a prominent surgeon, Donovan was graduated from Fordham University.

He asked his father, John D. Donovan, to help further his interest in journalism and writing by buying a small-town newspaper. His father said he'd do it if Donovan went to law school first.

DONOVAN WENT to Harvard Law School and that ended his writing ambitions.

Following the Cuban exchanges, Donovan was named to the New York City Board of Education, serving from 1963 to 1965. He became president of Pratt, a four-year college, in 1968.

He married the former Mary E. McKenna in 1941 and they had three daughters in addition to the son.

See also this file, 6 May 17 Feb 69.
21 Jul 71.
9 Sep 71.
11 May 72