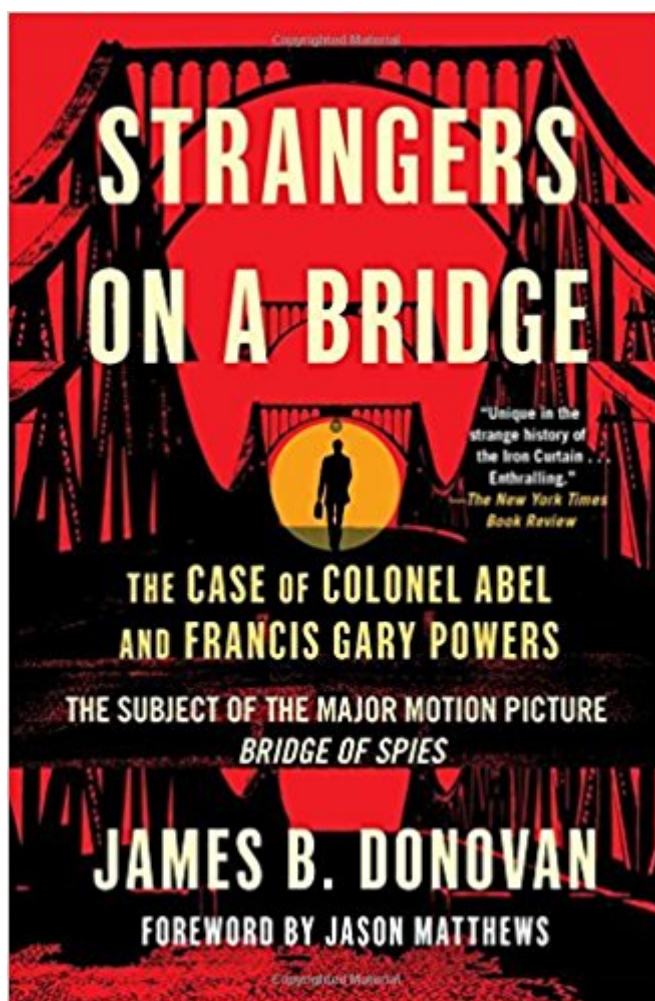


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# Strangers On A Bridge: The Case Of Colonel Abel And Francis Gary Powers



## Synopsis

The #1 New York Times bestseller and subject of the acclaimed major motion picture *Bridge of Spies* directed by Steven Spielberg, starring Tom Hanks as James B. Donovan. Originally published in 1964, this is the “enthral[ling]...truly remarkable” (The New York Times Book Review) insider account of the Cold War spy exchange with a new foreword by Jason Matthews, New York Times bestselling author of *Red Sparrow* and *Palace of Treason*. In the early morning of February 10, 1962, James B. Donovan began his walk toward the center of the Glienicke Bridge, the famous “Bridge of Spies” which then linked West Berlin to East. With him, walked Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, master spy and for years the chief of Soviet espionage in the United States. Approaching them from the other side, under equally heavy guard, was Francis Gary Powers, the American U-2 spy plane pilot famously shot down by the Soviets, whose exchange for Abel Donovan had negotiated. These were the strangers on a bridge, men of East and West, representatives of two opposed worlds meeting in a moment of high drama. Abel was the most gifted, the most mysterious, the most effective spy in his time. His trial, which began in a Brooklyn United States District Court and ended in the Supreme Court of the United States, chillingly revealed the methods and successes of Soviet espionage. No one was better equipped to tell the whole absorbing history than James B. Donovan, who was appointed to defend one of his country’s enemies and did so with scrupulous skill. In *Strangers on a Bridge*, the lead prosecutor in the Nuremberg Trials offers a clear-eyed and fast-paced memoir that is part procedural drama, part dark character study and reads like a noirish espionage thriller. From the first interview with Abel to the exchange on the bridge in Berlin—and featuring unseen photographs of Donovan and Abel as well as trial notes and sketches drawn from Abel’s prison cell—here is an important historical narrative that is “as fascinating as it is exciting” (The Houston Chronicle).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Before you see the new Coen brothers movie 'Bridge of Spies,' read the book that inspired it. 'Strangers on a Bridge,' the 1964 bestseller, tells a fascinating true story of Cold War espionage. An enthralling inside account. (Minneapolis Star Tribune)" "Unique in the strange history of the Iron Curtain... Enthralling... A truly remarkable account of how the author fulfilled his stewardship as a lawyer and as a negotiator. He has done us a real service in writing this engrossing and forthright book." (Allen Dulles, former chief of the CIA, in the New York Times Book Review) "Absorbing... A top-notch spy thriller." (Time Magazine) "As fascinating as it is exciting." (The Houston Chronicle) "Strangers on a Bridge guides us through the saga with a dry and courtly wisdom." (The New Yorker) "As compelling as The Spy Who Came In From the Cold--except it happens to be true." (Life Magazine) "An impressive story of devotion to justice and the national interest." (M.C. Miskovsky, CIA) "Well written and informative, Strangers on a Bridge is a wonderful firsthand account of the most notable spy swap made during the height of the Cold War. Written by defense attorney James Donovan in 1963, the book gives an accurate overview of the behind the scenes negotiations that resulted in KGB Colonel Rudolph Abel being exchanged for my father, CIA U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, in February 1962 on the Bridge of Spies." (Francis Gary Powers, Jr., Founder and Chairman Emeritus The Cold War Museum) "This book is much more than the exciting journal of one of history's great espionage cases, its preparation, trial and appeal and its dramatic dénouement at the Glienicke Bridge. Anyone who thrills to spy narratives and brilliant investigative work and skillful courtroom tactics will be sure to enjoy it." (Charles S. Desmond, Former Chief Judge of the State of New York)

Born in New York City in 1916, James B. Donovan graduated from Fordham University and Harvard Law School. A commander in the Navy during World War II, he became general counsel of the Office of Strategic Services and was associate prosecutor at the principal Nuremberg trial. Mr. Donovan subsequently acted as chief counsel in major trials and appeals in over thirty states, and was an insurance lawyer and partner at Watters and Donovan. He was Democratic candidate for

United States Senator from New York in 1962; served as general counsel for the Cuban Families Committee, obtaining the release of more than 9,700 Cubans and Americans from Castro's Cuba; was president of Pratt Institute; and was president of the Board of Education of the City of New York. He died in 1970, and was survived by his wife and four children. Jason Matthews is a retired officer of the CIA's Operations Directorate. Over a thirty-three-year career he served in multiple overseas locations and engaged in clandestine collection of national security intelligence, specializing in denied-area operations. Matthews conducted recruitment operations against Soviet, East European, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean targets. As Chief in various CIA Stations, he collaborated with foreign partners in counterproliferation and counterterrorism operations. He is the author of *Red Sparrow*, *Palace of Treason*, and the forthcoming *The Kremlin's Candidate*. He lives in Southern California.

I'm pretty sure that most of the people reading this review of "Strangers on the Bridge", by the late James Donovan, found their way here after seeing the Steven Spielberg/Tom Hanks movie, "Bridge of Spies". Hanks starred as the lawyer in the Rudolf Abel spy case and subsequent prisoner exchange in Berlin of Abel for Francis Gary Powers and a graduate student, Frederic Pryor. While the movie showed some of the Abel capture and then the trial, and finally the appeal to the United States Supreme Court, it really couldn't go into the detail that Donovan does in his 1964 book. Donovan - not to be confused with fellow lawyer and OSS founder, William "Wild Bill" Donovan - gives a steady account of both the trial and the exchange on the Glienike Bridge, which spans the Havel River in Berlin. "Strangers on a Bridge" isn't particularly exciting book, but it is written with an eye towards giving the truth, rather than the Hollywood version of the case. Certainly Spielberg and the Coen brothers do take artistic license with James Donovan and Rudolf Abel and Francis Gary Powers, but it seems less than many other "based on real life" movies that are made. James Donovan died in 1970 at the age of 53, of, I think, a heart attack. He left a legacy of government work behind, beginning with an early stint with the OSS, then working on the Nuremberg War trials, continuing with the defense of Soviet spy Rudolf Abel, and also helping with an exchange of prisoners in Cuba. He must have been quite a guy.

James B. Donovan's personal account of the trial of a Soviet spy in 1957 and the exchange of this convicted espionage agent for American U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers is compelling from start to finish. Anybody who is interested in the Fourth Amendment and its interpretation in the legal affairs

of Donovan's defense of Rudolph Abel will find this chronicle richly rewarding. Donovan has provided an insightful diary of the Cold War that scholars should read. Of course, Donovan's memoir differs in several respects from the Tom Hanks film "Bridge of Spies," but the film is largely faithful to the facts. Altogether, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would strongly recommend to anybody who is interested in the Cold War. I consider James B. Donovan a hero and a great American.

Strangers On a Bridge by James B Donovan  
Read the book first! That's what the advertisement said, and that is what I did. Now, I look forward to seeing the movie with Tom Hanks as James B Donovan. James B Donovan was a lawyer, a defense lawyer no less. He was General Counsel for the OSS in WWII and assisted with the Nuremberg Trials after the war. His background made him the perfect choice for defense counsel for Rudolf Abel accused Russian spy. "Our committee feels strongly that American justice along with the Soviet Colonel, will be on trial," the chairman of the Brooklyn Bar Association told Donovan. Donovan knew this would be no easy defense task. Feelings against the Russians were strong in 1957 America, but Donovan believed in the Constitution and that "every man, however despised, is entitled to counsel and a fair trial." Despite the criticism and his own patriotic duties James B Donovan became the legal counsel for accused spy Rudolf Abel. I enjoyed reading Strangers On a Bridge immensely. It reads like Donovan's personal diary. It not only gives the reader insight into a unique time in America's history, but also it shows us how the defense lawyer is such an integral part of our nation's justice system. Donovan takes the reader through the trial and subsequent appeals and all the way to a unique bridge in Berlin for an incredible prisoner exchange between two world powers.

A true spy story. Not a thriller but super engaging just the same. I couldn't put it down. Loved it. Well done Mr. Donovan

Mr. Donovan, one of the most memorable modern character I have encountered in my reading life during the last few years. He is a man with such deep character. Honest, brilliant, hard working conducts himself with a spirit of excellence in everything he does. He is compassionate and loves God and his family. Something rare in our society. Colonel Abel is also a very interesting individual. It was difficult to put this book down. I did not want to story to end. I am going to reread this book. I am looking forward to watching the move by Steven Spielberg. I am going to purchase every book I can find about Mr. Donovan. He lead a brilliant, interesting life. He made a huge difference in the

world.

Unlike the movie, *Strangers on the Bridge* is mostly about the arrest, trial, conviction, and appeal before the Supreme Court of Rudolph Abel, the Russian spy. When asked by the American Bar Association to represent Abel, James Donovan agreed to take the case, and his reasons are clear: he believed that Abel was entitled to the best defense possible. Abel was not someone who was betraying his country. Instead, he was working on behalf of his country, the Soviet Union. Donovan knew that Americans used spies, and if they were caught, he would want them to receive the same treatment he was willing to provide Abel. Throughout the long ordeal, Donovan plodded along, presenting the best case he could, and when Abel was found guilty, he took the case to the Supreme Court. The last third of the book concerns the Gary Powers/Rudolph Abel exchange. The back and forth is well documented, and you have to admire Donovan for not packing his bags and heading home in frustration. But the exchange meant that Powers (and another American) would come home to their families, and he wanted the world to view America through the prism of its justice system and concern for the individual, and he succeeded. It is an important story about Soviet/American relations early in the Kennedy administration. If you are an attorney, especially a litigator, you will love this story.

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