Spy Biographies

Klaus Fuchs: Klaus Fuchs was born in Germany in 1911, but fled to England before the outbreak of World War II. In 1937 he earned a PhD in Physics from the University of Bristol and went on to work on Britain's atomic bomb research project. In 1943 Fuchs was transferred to America to work on the Manhattan Project, as part of the Theoretical Physics Division.

Fuchs started passing information to the Russians in 1941, first from Britain, and later the United States. This information included the theoretical outline for developing a hydrogen bomb, which he passed to Alexandre Feklisov, his KGB Case Officer. Fuchs also passed information to Harry Gold, who acted as a courier for a variety of Russian spy rings.

Fuchs returned to England in 1946 and eventually admitted to his espionage activities in 1950. His statement led to the arrest of Harry Gold, which in turn led to the arrest of David Greenglass and the Rosenberg spy ring.

Because he had acted as a spy during World War II, when Russia was an ally of the United Kingdom, Fuchs was sentenced to just fourteen years in prison, the maximum possible for passing military secrets to a friendly nation.

Harry Gold: Harry Gold was born in Pennsylvania on December 12 1910 to a poor Russian family. He became interested in Socialism as a young man and this eventually led to contacts within the Communist movement. He was first recruited into espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union during the 1930s, acting as a courier for a variety of Russian spy rings.

Karl Fuchs, a Soviet spy working on the Manhattan project, eventually identified Gold as a courier. Under interrogation Gold also admitted to receiving information from David Greenglass, who was arrested, along with the rest of the Rosenberg spy ring, in 1950. The next year, Harry Gold was sentenced to thirty years in prison.
Alexandre Feklisov: Alexandre Feklisov worked at the Russian consulate office in New York from 1940 to 1946. However, his diplomatic role was a cover for his true activities as a KGB Case Officer, recruiting agents to work as spies for the Soviet Union.

These recruits included Karl Fuchs, who he met at least six times, and Julius Rosenberg, who he identified as one of his most valuable assets. Feklisov returned to the USSR in 1946, but went on to play a key part in resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis whilst working in Washington during the 1960s.

Anatoli Yatskov: During the 1940s, Anatoli Yatskov worked as the General Consul at the Russian consulate office in New York. At the same time he was also acting as a Senior Case Officer for the Russian spy network in the United States.

Yatskov played a key role in acquiring information from the Manhattan Project, the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons. He collaborated with both Harry Gold and Julius Rosenberg, as well as many other spies. Before his death, Yatskov, claimed that less than half of his network had been uncovered, including ‘Perseus’, who he said was a major source of information.

Yatskov was highly decorated in the Soviet Union, receiving various honours including the badge of Honourable State Security Agent.
David Greenglass:

David Greenglass worked at the Los Alamos Laboratory as part of the Manhattan Project, whilst serving in the United States Army. Greenglass was a talented machinist who made implosion detonators as part of the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons.

Greenglass was recruited into espionage by his wife, a member of the Young Communist League. He passed information on his work to both Harry Gold, who acted as a courier for a variety of Russian spy rings, and his brother in law Julius Rosenberg.

Unknown to Greenglass, Klaus Fuchs was also passing information to the Soviet Union from within Los Alamos. When Fuchs admitted to his espionage activities the trail soon led to David Greenglass, who was arrested in June 1950.

When the FBI questioned Greenglass he agreed to testify against Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in exchange for immunity for his wife. During his trial he claimed that Ethel Rosenberg had typed up his notes to pass on to the Russians. However, this job was probably carried out by his wife who was given the codename “Osa”. As a result of the Rosenberg trial, Ethel Rosenberg was executed in June 1953, whilst Ruth Greenglass remained free, caring for the couples children. David Greenglass was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Upon his release he was reunited with his wife.

Ruth Greenglass: Ruth Greenglass was recruited into espionage by her brother in law Julius Rosenberg. Her husband was David Greenglass, a talented machinist who made implosion lenses as part of the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons.

In November 1944, after Rosenberg had told Ruth the purpose of the Manhattan Project, she visited her husband in New Mexico and asked him pass on information about the project. It is likely that she typed up his notes to pass on to the Russians. She testified against the Rosenbergs at their trial and was never jailed for her part in the spy ring.
**Julius Rosenberg:**

Julius Rosenberg was born in 1918, and as a Young Man became a leader in the Young Communist League. He was recruited by the KGB in 1942 and passed thousands of reports to his KGB Case Officer, Alexandre Feklisov.

Rosenberg was also responsible for recruiting others into the KGB’s ranks, including his sister in law, Ruth Greenglass and, through her, his brother in law David Greenglass, a talented machinist who made implosion lenses as part of the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons.

Greenglass passed information on implosion lenses to Julius Rosenberg and Harry Gold from 1944 onwards. When Gold was arrested in 1950, the trail soon led to Julius Greenglass and his wife, Ethel Rosenberg. The two were tried, under charges of espionage, between 1951 and 1953, when they were sentenced to death and executed by electric chair. The couple were the only American civilians to be executed under charges of espionage during the Cold War.

**Ethel Rosenberg:** Ethel Rosenberg (nee Greenglass) met her husband, Julius Rosenberg when she joined the Young Communist League. She was the sister of David Greenglass, a talented machinist who made implosion lenses as part of the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons.

Greenglass passed information on implosion lenses to Julius Rosenberg and Harry Gold from 1944 onwards. When Gold was arrested in 1950, the trail soon led to Greenglass and then the Rosenbergs. Greenglass testified against his sister in exchange for immunity for his wife. During his trial he claimed that Ethel had typed up his notes, containing nuclear secrets, to pass on to the Russians. However, this job was probably carried out by his wife, Ruth Greenglass.

Ethel Rosenberg and her husband were sentenced to death and executed by electric chair in June 1953. The couple were the only American civilians to be executed under charges of espionage during the Cold War.

**Morton Sobell:** Morton Sobell was tried for espionage, along with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, in 1951. He was found guilty and sentenced to 30 years in prison, serving his time in Alcatraz.
**Alan Nunn May:** Alan Nunn May was the first spy to be discovered within the Manhattan project. He was a British physicist who passed information on both Britain’s atomic bomb research project and, later, the work taking place at Los Alamos.

May was discovered in 1945, when Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet cipher clerk, defected to the West. Gouzenko had worked at the Soviet Embassy since 1943. As part of his job he both coded and deciphered messages relating to Soviet espionage activities. Rather than being posted back to Russia he decided to defect, leaving the Russian Embassy on September 05th 1945, with over 100 documents, including code books and deciphering materials.

In 1946, Alan Nunn May was tried in Canada, and received ten years hard labour. His case brought to light the weaknesses in both British and American security.

**Igor Gouzenko:** Igor Gouzenko was born in Russia in 1919. At the start of the Second World War he joined the Russian Army and trained as a cipher clerk. In 1943 Gouzenko was posted to Canada where he both coded and deciphered messages relating to Soviet espionage activities.

In 1945 Gouzenko was due to be posted back to Russia, but instead decided to defect. On September 05th 1945 he left the Russian Embassy with over 100 documents, including code books and deciphering materials. That night Gouzenko and his family were hidden by a neighbour as Soviet agents broke into their apartment. The next day officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police examined the documents he had removed, revealing weaknesses in both British and American security.

This evidence led to the arrest of various suspects, including Alan Nunn May, a British physicist who passed information on both Britain’s atomic bomb research project and, later, the work taking place at Los Alamos. It is also likely that Gouzenko’s evidence was used in the case against Klaus Fuchs, a German born physicist who had also worked on the Manhattan Project.

**Theodore Hall:** Theodore Alvin Hall was a scientist on the Manhattan Project, the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons. He was recruited to the project when he was just 19 years old, having graduated from Harvard University with a degree in physics.

Hall passed detailed information on the plutonium bomb to the Soviet Union with the help of his friend, Saville Sax. The pair were recruited after a meeting with Sergey Kurnakov, a Soviet journalist and KGB agent living in New York. They also dealt with Lona Cohen, who acted as an intelligence courier for the network.
Although he was questioned by the FBI in 1951, Hall was never charged for his espionage activities. Towards the end of his life Hall partially admitted to the part he had played in leaking secrets to the Soviets, before passing away in 1999.

**Saville Sax:** Saville Sax was the best friend of Theodore Alvin Hall, an American scientist working on the Manhattan Project, the wartime effort to develop the first atomic weapons. The duo had met whilst they were at Harvard University. Sax helped Hall pass detailed information on the plutonium bomb to the Soviet Union, travelling to New Mexico to accept materials from his friend. These were then passed to both Lona Cohen, an intelligence officer, and Sergey Kurnakov, a Soviet journalist and KGB agent living in New York.

**Lona Cohen:** Lona Cohen was a member of the American Communist Party who was first recruited into Soviet espionage at the start of the Second World War. Cohen was based in New York. Her contacts included Theodore Hall, an American physicist working on the Manhattan project, and his friend, Saville Sax. She passed information from the project onto Leonid Kvasnikov, a KGB intelligence Officer, also based in New York.

During the 1950s Cohen and her husband, Morris, fled to Moscow before resurfacing in London with new identities. They continued their espionage activities once in the UK, transmitting information for a total of 7 years from 1954 to 1961, when they were finally arrested. In 1969 the couple were exchanged for a Britain being held by the Soviet Union. They moved back to Moscow where they trained other operatives in intelligence operations.

**Sergey Kurnakov:** Sergey Kurnakov was a Soviet journalist and KGB agent living in New York. He was a member of the Communist Party of the United States and an information courier for a variety of Soviet intelligence sources.

His contacts included Theodore Hall, an American physicist working on the Manhattan project, and his friend, Saville Sax. The pair approached Kurnakov and offered to pass information on the Manhattan project to the Soviet Union, including details on the atomic bomb. Kurnakov passed details of this meeting onto Anatoly Yatskov, the Senior Case Officer for the Russian spy network in the United States.

**Leonid Kvasnikov:** Leonid Kvasnikov joined the KGB in 1938. He was a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Chemical Machine-Building and worked as a specialist in scientific and technical intelligence.
Kvasnikov supervised the penetration of the British and American atomic bomb projects from Moscow and was posted to America himself between 1943 and 1945. He was highly decorated in the Soviet Union, receiving various honours including the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Star.