



Tense and tearful, Elizabeth Bentley—branded as “Red Spy Queen”—told a House committee in 1948 about ex-comrades

MY LIFE AS A SPY

I MEET TRAGEDY AND DISILLUSION

BY ELIZABETH BENTLEY

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● Throughout World War II a well-organized group of Communists got themselves strategically placed in high government offices, where they could drain off secret war plans and inventions and pass them along to the Russians. Among the most important links in this chain of spies was Elizabeth Bentley, born in New England and educated at Vassar. Her boss, Yasha Golos, one of the top figures in the Russian underground, was more than just a boss. He was also her lover, and they lived together.

Last month Miss Bentley told how she and Yasha traveled back and forth between New York and Washington, picking up government data from Gregory Silvermaster and his wife, from William Remington and others. They did their job so well that the Russians finally determined to separate them from the American Communist party and give them orders directly from Moscow. Miss Bentley tells how she battled this move, how Russian pressure killed her lover and how, in desperation, she eventually broke away from the Party and went to the FBI.—THE EDITORS

MY MIND was made up. The Russians were not going to take me away from Yasha. He was all I had, everything I loved. He needed me. He was so sick now that he would die if he didn't have me near him.

He too was determined that the Russians should not have me. “No, *golubishka*,” he told me tenderly, “that’s one thing I won’t let them do. No matter what happens, I won’t let them take you away from me.”

I was not the only member of our group of spies that the Russians wanted. They were more insistent now than ever about Mary Price, who had borrowed “interesting” papers from Walter Lippmann’s files when she was his Washington secretary and copied them for us. They wanted to make a prostitute of her, so she could pick up more information for them. They were determined too to get the Gregory Silvermasters, who had been my closest contacts in Washington during the early years of the war.

When Yasha told me what the Russians wanted I exploded. “They can’t do that to us,”

I said. “Just let me at them and I’ll tell them a thing or two.”

Yasha only looked at me pityingly.

Soon afterward he won a partial victory. The Silvermaster group was to be turned over to a new Soviet contact, but one who would not see it directly. I was to continue collecting the government secrets it turned up. Also I was not to be taken away from Yasha. I would be able to continue helping him with the other Communist agents in Washington.

“You see,” I said happily to Yasha, “you were imagining things. The Russians are intelligent people. Once you explained the situation they fell in with your ideas. Obviously they’re only taking over the group to relieve you.”

I was soon to learn that my optimism was unfounded. Yasha’s relations with the Russians grew rapidly worse. Day after day they steadily put the screws on him to turn over Mary Price, and wearily but doggedly he refused.

Often he would come home taut and grim after a meeting with (Continued on page 131)

I MEET TRAGEDY AND DISILLUSION

Continued from page 50

with his Russian contact and would pace the floor silently, then throw himself on the couch and bury his head in his hands. Bewildered, I would sit beside him, unable to help, not knowing what was bothering him.

Sometimes in the midst of his pacing, Yasha would stop and stare at me savagely. Then in the tone of a man being tortured beyond his endurance he would cry out, "If I turn traitor, turn me in!"

I would turn my face away, because the sight of that naked suffering was more than I could bear. Even today those words return to haunt me, and the pain of remembering is deeper because now I understand.

Much later I realized that Yasha had been deliberately driving himself beyond his physical endurance because for him death was a merciful solution to his dilemma. The movement had been his entire life. He had given himself unsparingly and without any thought of reward.

AFTER mid-November the Russians issued an ultimatum: either Yasha would hand over Mary Price and agree to carry out any future orders without quibbling, or he would have to leave the service and be considered a traitor. He must give his answer in three days. Yasha received this news listlessly. He was by now too beaten and tired a man to care very much.

What his decision would have been I never knew. Mercifully he was spared the ordeal of deciding. On Thanksgiving evening, a day before he was to meet his Russian superior, Yasha quietly died.

The night before, he was pensive and absent-minded and forgot to keep an appointment with a very important contact. The next morning he slept late and hardly seemed to have the strength to get out of bed. I too was exhausted. We thought briefly of staying home and cooking a simple meal. Then Yasha smiled at me wanly.

"No," he said finally. "Today's Thanksgiving, and I'd like a special meal with all the trimmings."

We had a late afternoon dinner and then went to the movies. Afterward Yasha thought he ought to go home and change his suit. I looked at him, and with panic I realized that the end was at most a few days off. He couldn't be alone when that happened. I must be close to him. Hurriedly I bundled him into a bus, and we rode home.

When we reached the drugstore a block from my house, he began to worry about our work. He insisted that I make a phone call. I refused, knowing he was in no condition to think about such things. I told him I was too tired to bother with work that day. He looked at me sadly and said the first cruel words that had ever passed his lips.

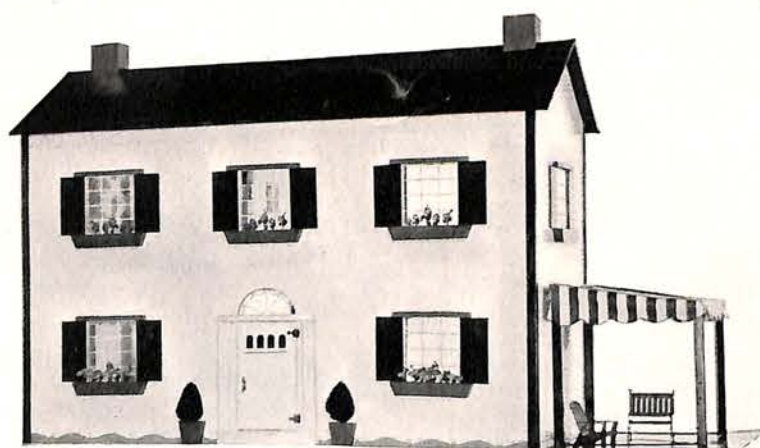
"Why did I ever marry you?" he muttered bitterly. "I thought you would be a good strong revolutionary and not a sissy."

I couldn't answer him, for I think if I had I would have burst into tears.

In silence we reached the front door of my apartment house, and he painfully climbed the short flight of stairs. Once inside, he lay down on the couch and turned on the radio. I busied myself in the bathroom, washing out his socks.

Soon the program shifted. "Shall I find another station?" I asked.

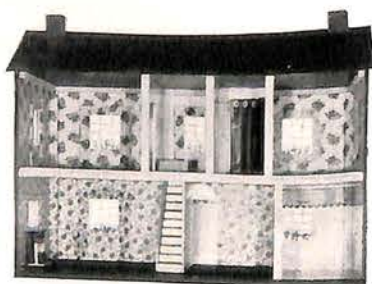
(Continued on page 134)



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(Continued from page 131)

He only shook his head and closed his eyes, drifting off to sleep. I went back to the bathroom, changed into my pajamas and set my hair in pin curls. When I returned to the living room he was sleeping peacefully. Completely exhausted myself. I stretched out beside him and must have dozed off for about an hour.

I AWAKENED suddenly with the panicky sense that something was wrong. Then I realized that, although he was seemingly still asleep, horrible choking sounds were coming from his throat. Frantically I shook him.

"Wake up, Yasha!" I cried. "You're having a nightmare."

He did not respond, but lay inertly on the couch, the same choking sounds coming from his throat. Remembering my Red Cross training I dashed into the kitchen, returning with a bottle of brandy. I tried to force some of it down his throat, but he couldn't swallow. Then my mind flashed back fifteen years to my mother's last moments. This was a death rattle that I was hearing. No, he couldn't be dying! I wouldn't let him! I grabbed the telephone and dialed the operator.

"Operator!" I shouted hysterically. "Get me an ambulance, quick!"

"Just a moment," she said calmly. "I'll get you the Police Department."

Sickeningly I realized that I couldn't afford to get involved with the police. It was too dangerous to the movement. But I didn't care then. My Yasha was very ill, and I needed help. As I waited, the steady voice of the desk sergeant at the Charles Street police station came on the wire.

"A man has just had a heart attack," I said, trying to keep my voice steady. "He needs a doctor. Can you help me?"

"Certainly," he said. "I'll have an ambulance there right away."

I slammed down the receiver, frantically tore off my pajamas and took the bobby pins out of my hair. Yasha still lay there unconscious, making those queer sounds. As I threw my clothes on and tied my hair into a knot, I kept crying out desperately to Yasha: "Hold on, darling. Just hold on a few minutes longer. There's help coming."

The buzzer downstairs rang. Yasha seemed to be still choking, but his eyes had rolled upward, giving him a fixed, glassy stare. Mechanically, without even thinking, I closed his eyelids.

There was a knock at the door, and two men in white came in. The taller one walked over to Yasha and looked at him. He lifted Yasha's eyelids and stared at his eyes, then listened to his heart. He looked at his partner significantly, picked up the telephone and dialed a number.

"Hello," he said. "Yes, it's me. No, pal, it's too late. He's D.O.A. What'll we do now? Wait for the police? OK, see you soon."

He hung up the receiver and nonchalantly lit a cigarette.

Quite suddenly my knees gave way and I sat down on the nearest chair. I knew that phrase, D.O.A. It meant "Dead on Arrival"! The room swirled around me, but with an effort I steadied myself. Yasha was dead. Never again would I hear his voice. Never again would I come home to find him waiting for me. I gripped the arms of the chair and fought back a rising hysteria. I wanted to go to pieces and sob violently. What did anything matter now that he was gone?

Suddenly I remembered the police were coming. Yasha's pockets were full of vital material, including the coded telephone numbers of most of his agents. They must not be found.

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I couldn't let Yasha down. I forced myself to think clearly.

I persuaded the men to leave me alone with Yasha. Hurriedly I bolted the lock after them. Then swiftly, systematically, I went through all Yasha's pockets, abstracting the material and transferring it to my pocketbook.

When the police arrived they told me, "You look worn out, ma'am. If you can get in touch with his doctor, we can settle things fast."

I got unsteadily to my feet and dialed the doctor.

He sounded irritated. "There's no use in my coming down," he said crossly. "The man's dead, isn't he?"

I hung up in despair and stared at the policemen.

"Well," said the larger of the two, "we'll just have to wait until the medical examiner comes so that we can get a death certificate. Then the body can be moved for burial."

A plain-clothes man from the Charles Street station wandered in and began to ask me questions. When I told him Yasha's hotel address he sent some of his men over to the Hotel Madison to take charge of the effects.

Then he turned to me and said, "You've got a problem on your hands. Some relative has got to authorize the transfer of the body to an undertaker, even when we get the death certificate. Can you get in touch with a relative?"

"I can tomorrow," I said.

"All right," he told me. "After the medical examiner is through, go ahead and call an undertaker. Then, first thing in the morning, call me up and give me the name of the mortician and the telephone number of his relative. I think that will work. There's no need to take him down to the morgue."

I felt a surge of relief. I didn't want Yasha's body carried off to a city morgue and put on a cold slab among strangers. I wanted it taken care of by someone I knew, and treated with friendly consideration. But what undertaker? At this point the medical examiner sauntered in, obviously annoyed at being dragged away from a party.

"This is a hell of a time for anyone to die," he said. "Why didn't his own doctor come down? It would have saved me a trip."

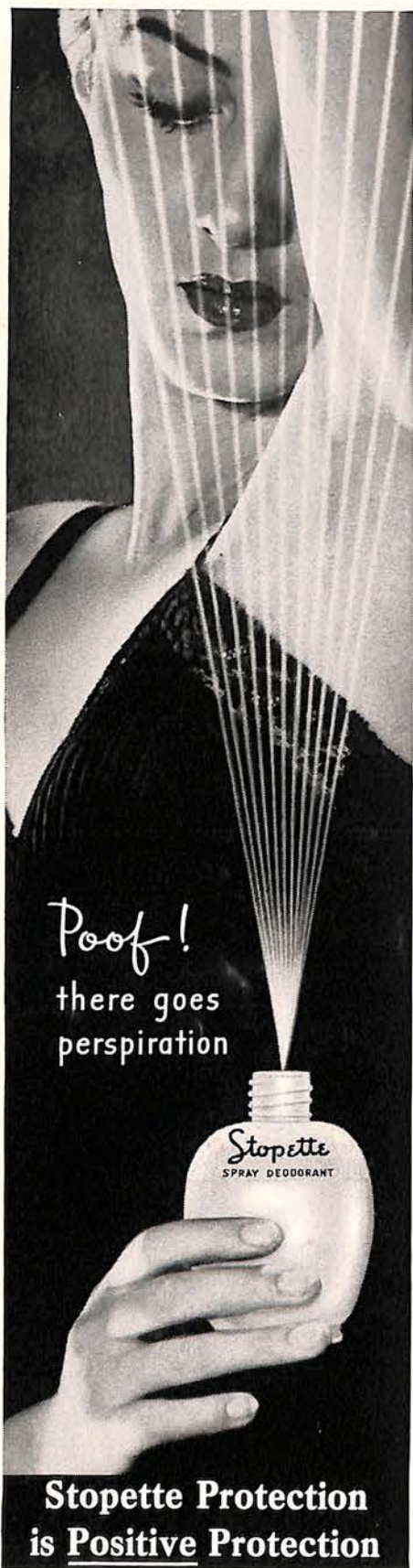
Just then Lem Harris phoned. He was a veteran comrade. I explained the situation briefly to him without saying too much, and waited for his answer.

"Don't say anything on your end," he said tersely. "Just listen to me. Golos was a long-time member of the I.W.O. They'll handle all the arrangements, so you won't worry about the wrong sort of person coming in to spoil the setup. And, by the way, don't bother the Reynoldses with all this. There are angles they had better not know."

I thanked him and hung up. By then the medical examiner had filled out the certificate and was ready to depart, along with the police.

As the door banged shut I realized that it was now after 1:00 A.M. The room was appallingly quiet. As I looked over at Yasha, huddled in a heap underneath a blanket that had been thrown over him, the whole impact of my grief suddenly hit me. I put my head down and sobbed uncontrollably.

Then panic seized me. Now I must take Yasha's place and continue on without his wisdom and love to guide me. It seemed as if I was walking head-on into a nightmare. I won't do it, I said to myself desperately. Something is very, very wrong—something that killed my Yasha. Whatever it is, I'm not going to be caught in it.



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I walked over to the couch, and gently pulling down the blanket I stared at Yasha's face. Shame flooded over me. He depended on me to carry on for him. I couldn't leave now. Gently I bent down and kissed his cold forehead. This was my farewell.

AFTER the I.W.O. undertakers had carried Yasha away in a canvas basket, I found myself standing in an intolerably empty, silent apartment. Uncertainly I moved to the bathroom and looked at Yasha's socks still hanging there.

It was five o'clock. I put on my coat and hat.

When I walked into the World Tourists building the sleepy elevator operator inquired why I was up so early. I told him nothing.

Once in the office, I went to the safe and stripped it of all incriminating documents. Into a suitcase, left in the office for that specific purpose, I crammed all the papers and about \$1200 in cash. According to Yasha's instructions—to be carried out in the event of his death—the documents were to be destroyed and the money was to go to Earl Browder.

Then I took a taxi home. I tore up the papers and burned them in the fireplace. Then, when the ashes were cold, I leaned back wearily. If I could only keep going a little longer!

At ten o'clock I went to Earl Browder's office on the ninth floor of Com-

through my mind: When in doubt, bluff—and keep on bluffing!

"Of course, Earl," I said, in what I hoped was a calm voice.

He seemed relieved. "Good. Then you'll be taking care of the Washington comrades. I'm glad of that. I don't like the thought of our Americans being turned over to Soviet contacts. I've told Golos that over and over again."

This was the theme that had obsessed Yasha during the last few months of his life: *Don't hand the Americans over to the Russians*. And now Earl, who seemed to be a fairly sane person, was saying the same thing. It couldn't have been the imagination of a dying man. There was something seriously wrong! Earl was an old friend of Yasha's. I could talk to him, and perhaps from him I could learn the truth. Then abruptly I checked myself. What had Yasha said about Earl? *He's a good guy, but he doesn't know all that's going on. Be very careful what you say to him.*

And here I was in the midst of a spider web, holding all the threads in my hands and yet not knowing what pattern was being spun. Earl thought I knew all the answers. I couldn't tell him I didn't.

I eyed him appraisingly. "Will you back me up if I refuse to turn Mary Price over to the Russians?"

He hesitated. Then he nodded.



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munist party headquarters. Even dulled as I was by grief, I noticed that his greeting was theatrical. He advanced to meet me, both hands outstretched.

"Comrade Bentley," he said in a tone worthy of a speaker on a rostrum, "this is a great loss to the movement! Our old friend Golos is dead, but we shall continue to go forward!"

Briefly I told him what had happened. At the end I handed him the \$1200.

"Yasha wanted you to have this," I said.

He put it in his pocket absently. Then he turned to me.

"This thing's got to be handled very carefully," he said. "We can't let Golos be too closely tied up with the American Party—it'll wreck us. Leave the publicity to me. I'll talk to Budenz. You're taking Golos' place, aren't you?"

I tried to pull myself together. Emotional strain plus lack of food and sleep was beginning to tell on me. But I couldn't go to pieces now. There was too much at stake. What, actually, had been Yasha's job? Come to think of it, I didn't really know. Yet now I was in a tight spot. I had to answer. Suddenly the old Party maxim flashed

"We must have some foolproof means of communication," he said. "Hereafter when you come here or telephone, I will be available—no matter what I'm doing."

I walked down the corridor to the exit, thinking that Yasha must have been very important for Earl to be so subservient.

BACK in the office, the day dragged on. The left-wing press came, one after the other—Louis Budenz from the *Daily Worker* (he was careful to show no indication of knowing me), then a man from the Communist Jewish paper *Freiheit*, then a staff member from the Communist Russian paper *Russky Golos*, an old friend of Yasha's who was visibly moved by his death and finally a representative of the *New Masses*.

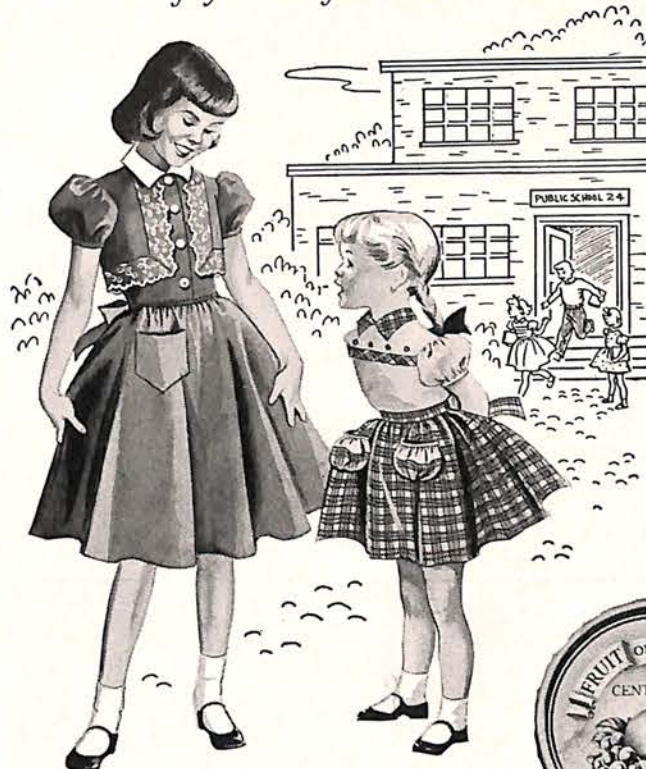
On Sunday afternoon the services for Yasha were held at the Gramercy Park Memorial Chapel on Second Avenue. The small chapel was jammed with friends, relatives and high-up Communist party functionaries.

It was the first revolutionary funeral I had ever attended. There was no mention of religion. It consisted mostly of speeches by comrades extolling the achievements of Comrade Golos. (Continued on page 138)

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(Continued from page 135)

Finally Alexander Trachtenberg arose and launched into what I later learned was one of his customary long-winded orations. I remembered what Yasha had said about Trachtenberg. "He's just a windbag and a coward," he had told me. "I kicked him out of my office, and he hasn't dared come back since."

THAT evening at eight o'clock I had a prearranged appointment to meet my Soviet contact "Catherine" (who had replaced John) at the newsreel theater on 42d Street, opposite Grand Central Station. I was sure that Catherine would not be alone. Undoubtedly the Russians had heard of Yasha's death and would send some high-up man to discuss the situation with me.

Five minutes after I had arrived, Catherine silently slid into the seat beside me. For a few moments we watched the film without speaking. Then she put her hand on my arm. "Follow me out," she whispered. "We have an appointment."

When we neared the corner of 51st Street I saw her taut face brighten. I looked up the street to see a jaunty-looking man in his mid-30s, with his hat perched on the back of his head, approaching us. As he walked up to us Catherine greeted him with false gaiety.

"Hello, Bill," she said. "Helen, this is your new boss, Bill."

My new boss! I stared at him, noting his deep-set eyes, like round brown shoe buttons, his high Slavic cheekbones, his straight dark hair that was only kept from falling over one eye by his hat. Certainly he must have spent plenty of money on that tailor-made suit and matching accessories. As I eyed him appraisingly, he slipped one hand under my arm and the other under Catherine's.

"You must be hungry, girls," he said with a decided Russian accent. "Let's go get some food."

At Janssen's he insisted on ordering the most expensive items on the menu for himself and Catherine: caviar, oyster cocktails, broiled lobster. Although he pressed me to eat, I contented myself with a cup of coffee. I had already had a sandwich, and besides in the face of all this elegance I could only think of poor Yasha, who had scrimped and saved and eaten in cheap cafeterias.

When Bill had finished his dinner he sat forward in his chair, the air of camaraderie gone, the brown eyes hard and calculating. I suddenly realized that I had underestimated the man. Despite his superficial appearance of a boulevardier, he was a tough character.

"We want Mary Price turned over to the Russians immediately," he said. "We've got a job for her to do—call it vice or prostitution or whatever you want." There was a hint of menace in his voice. "We've put up with enough of your delaying tactics on this subject."

I was stunned. I had come to him expecting to meet a comrade, and instead I was being treated like an enemy. I remembered my revolutionary training. With an effort I kept my face expressionless and my voice steady.

"I'm sorry," I said calmly, stalling for time. "Earl doesn't want her turned over."

He glared back at me. "Who the hell's Earl? You take your orders from us."

I fought for self-control. "I think you'll find that it's better to let the matter drop," I replied. "Mary's in a highly nervous state, and she wouldn't be any good to you right now."

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As I spoke I glanced over at Catherine, perhaps half hoping she would understand. To my dismay her face was hard, and there was enmity in her eyes.

Bill was eying me savagely. His voice cut like a whip. "Let's not argue. We want Mary, and we're going to get her. And you will be wise to play along with us!" The menace in his voice was now unmistakable. "We've spent months playing around with that traitor Golos, and now we're going to settle this matter."

That did it! The bewilderment that had been clutching me disappeared. I was suddenly alive and alert.

"Don't be so excited, Bill," I said. "It takes time to work these things out, but in the long run everything straightens out very nicely. Just give me time to work on Earl."

With triumph in his eyes, he nodded. He thinks he's scared me, I thought, but if he only knew!

I said goodbye to Catherine and Bill, made arrangements to meet them the end of the week, then headed for home.

On Tuesday I went to Washington to see Gregory and Helen Silvermaster, who were my most important Washington contacts.

"Thank God you're here," Helen said. "We read the news in the paper, and we've been worried ever since. We would have come up to New York tomorrow if we hadn't heard from you."

A sad group of people sat around the Silvermasters' kitchen table. As we sipped tea we talked about what a wonderful person Yasha had been. Helen and Greg had known him many years. For them it was a very personal loss.

They gave me the material to take to New York. I took it and asked no questions.

On my return from Washington I had dinner with Bill. He again demanded that I turn Mary over immediately. He had, he said, been patient long enough. When I tried to explain that she would be no good for the work, he cut me short abruptly. He lashed out at me, demanding, threatening, even calling me a traitor. Bewildered and frightened as I was, I dug my heels in and fought back. No one was going to force me to turn any contact over unless I thought it was the right thing to do. And from what I could see of Bill, he was certainly not the proper person to take care of anyone. The more I resisted, the more mercilessly he pounded at me, until I began to wonder just how much longer I could hold out.

This was to be the pattern of our future meetings. Night after night, after battling with him, I would crawl home to bed, sometimes too weary even to undress. Now I knew what Yasha had faced. These were the men the organization had sent to deal with us!

IN THE meantime the Silvermaster group was stepping up production and giving us really valuable data. One of Greg's people, William Ludwig Ullman, had wormed his way into the good graces of high-up Air Force officers in the Pentagon, and from them he was able to find out the date of D day four days ahead of time. I remember his chuckling because he had been able to win a bet from another man in his office. "The guy didn't have a chance," he said. "I knew the date and he didn't."

Around this time Lud also brought me samples of the marks the United States was preparing for use in the German occupation. The Russians were delighted, as they were planning to counterfeit them. However, due to a complicated ink process, this proved

impossible—until we were able through Harry White to arrange that the U. S. Treasury Department turn the actual printing plates over to the Russians!

Evidently these activities of the Silvermaster group interested the Russians very much, for by spring Bill had shifted his point of attack and, dropping the subject of Mary Price, launched into a stormy demand that Greg be turned over. I refused and, with Earl backing me up, continued to battle against any such idea. Bill, evidently unable to get any further in the matter, finally said that he would settle for just one meeting with Greg. After that, he assured me, I could carry on as contact.

"After all," he said reasonably, "he's one of our most valuable people, and I would like to have a look at him."

Dubiously I consulted Earl, who thought the matter over and then half-heartedly agreed.

One evening Greg and I met Bill for dinner at Longchamps, at 34th Street and Fifth Avenue. Bill was in his gayest mood, and went out of his way to charm Greg. He insisted that Greg have the most expensive meal, complete with wine. He flattered him on the work he was doing, implying that he was one of the pillars of the Soviet Union. I watched him cynically, thinking of the real Bill beneath all this veneer of good fellowship.

AT MY next two meetings with him Bill was oddly quiet and peaceful. He was undoubtedly up to something. I was soon to find out. One day, almost drooling with arrogance, he said: "Earl has agreed to turn Greg over to me."

I stared at him, with a sinking feeling.

"I don't believe it!"

"Go and ask him," he replied.

The next day, as I faced him across his desk, Earl refused to look me in the eye.

"I've told our friends that they can have Greg," he said.

"But why did you do it, Earl?" I cried out. "You know what the Russians are like. They'll ruin Greg."

He shrugged his shoulders and carelessly looked at the wall.

"Don't be naïve," he said cynically. "You know that when the chips are down I have to take my orders from them. I just hoped that I could side-track them in this particular matter, but it didn't work out."

"But Greg's an old friend of yours." "So what?" he replied. "He's expendable."

So that was Earl Browder, head of the American Communist party!

Bill, once he had won his victory, relaxed.

One evening Bill suggested that I draw a salary as an agent. I didn't like the idea, even though it was only to be \$50 a month. I refused, but Bill continued to press me, finally raising the ante to \$300.

After several long battles on this subject, Bill shifted his point of attack. He was, he said, in the fur business. He would like to buy me an expensive fur coat. When I turned him down on this he bobbed up with the idea of presenting me with an air-conditioning unit for my apartment. So they are trying to buy me off, I thought to myself. Then, still struggling not to believe it, I turned to him.

"Bill," I asked, "is this your idea, or were you told to do this?"

He looked away from me. "No, it wasn't my idea. I never do anything on my own." Then, very bitterly: "I'm only small fry. They can kick me around all they want to."

On the day of the 1944 hurricane I went down to Washington to collect the Silvermasters' material for the last time. Our meeting was a sad one. We ate our dinner almost in silence. I went over their material briefly, then I reminded them that Bill would be expecting Greg in New York the following week. We stared at one another. This was the end of the good old days, the days when we worked together as good comrades. Now we were parting.

Back in New York I got their material together, adding to it the data from my other agents, and went to meet Bill. I handed over the package and stood looking at him. He smiled, and for the first time I saw what seemed like pity in his eyes.

"Goodbye and good luck," he said gently. "Remember you are to meet your new contact in two weeks."

IN EARLY October I met Jack, my new contact, in front of a drugstore on Park Avenue in the 50s. He was completely colorless and nondescript. This, I said to myself, is the most perfect undercover agent I have seen.

He looked at me sharply. "Let's go up to Central Park and find a bench and sit and talk."

His English was as good as mine. There was even a touch of Brooklyn about it. Could he be a Russian? I asked him if he spoke Russian. He smiled and said he didn't.

"You know," I said casually, "the Russians used to call me *umnitsa* [clever little girl]."

He laughed. I smiled to myself. He certainly knew Russian. No one (Continued on page 140)



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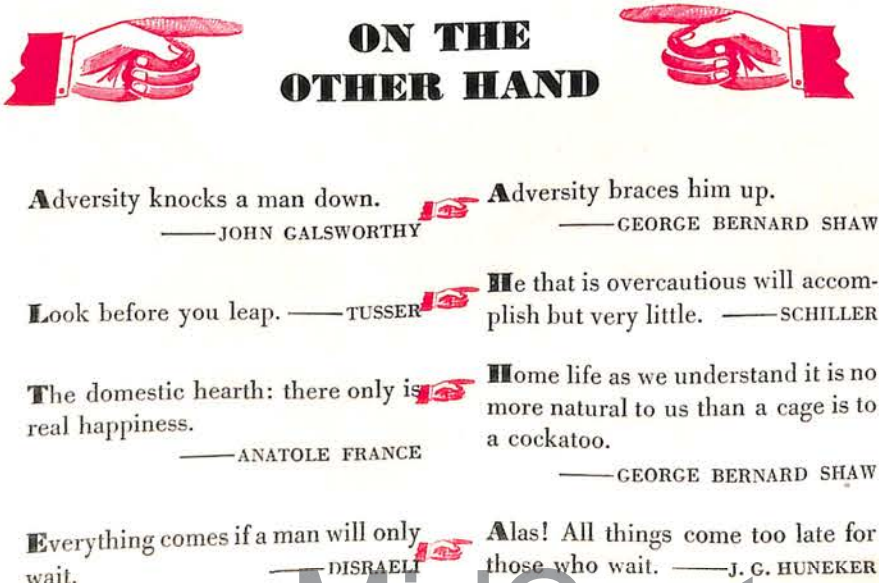
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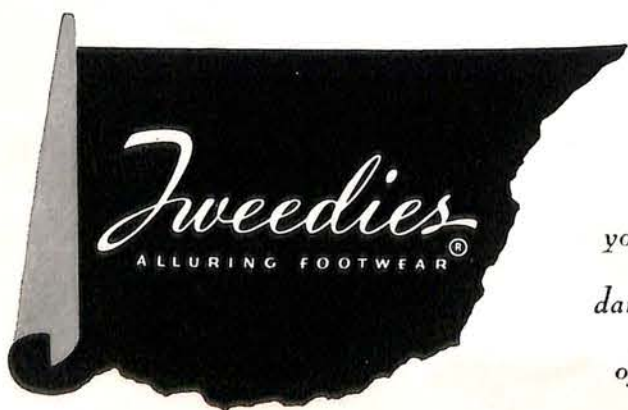


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I waited for what seemed an interminable time on the corner. Then finally, when I was about to give up in despair, I heard a voice with a distinctly British accent say, "I'm sorry I'm so late."

He laughed. "Look here. It's not so difficult. The small circles at the bottom of the page represent agents in the United States Government. The slightly larger ones to which they are connected by lines are couriers. The Xs to which these are attached stand for mail drops, and the medium-sized



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circles to which these in turn are hitched are the poles—that is, the trusted members of the service who take complete charge of a group of agents. Thus, three agents in Washington are handled by one courier, who in turn puts the information into a mail drop, where it is passed on to the pole."

"And I am to become a pole?"

"Right. And it's a great honor too. In fact, it's rare indeed that an American works himself up to such a post."

Then, to my astonishment, he drew himself up stiffly in his chair and looked at me very seriously.

"You are very fortunate. A great honor has just been bestowed on you. The Supreme Presidium of the U.S.S.R. has just awarded you one of the highest medals of the Soviet Union—the Order of the Red Star."

I stared at him. "The Red Star," I said dazedly.

"I don't blame you for being overwhelmed," he said. "It's an honor that few people receive." Then he pulled a clipping, in color, from his pocket. "This is a facsimile of the decoration," he said. "The original will arrive very shortly. But you can take my word for it that this medal is one of the highest—reserved for all our best fighters. Although all the other decorations on a soldier's jacket are worn on the left side, this one alone is worn on the right. That entitles you to many special privileges. You could even ride on the streetcars free."

He stopped for a moment. Then, seeming to sense that I was not too impressed by this, he went on. "Besides, you are a member of the most powerful organization in the Soviet Union. We are the ones who really rule the country. Just wait until you pay a visit to Moscow. You will be wined and dined and treated like a princess. We know how to reward our people for what they have done."

This speech revolted me. I thought for a moment I was going to be violently ill. I pulled on my coat and got to my feet.

"I'd better leave now, Al," I said. "I'm afraid I'll miss the last train." As he handed me into a cab, Al took my hand and kissed it.

"Goodbye, darling," he said.

I didn't answer, for I think if I had I would have spit in his face.

SO THIS was what the top leaders of the Communist world movement were like! What a fool I had been! I had given all my energy, all my time, everything I had and loved for the Communists because I thought they were trying to better conditions for downtrodden workers everywhere. I had submitted without question to Party discipline. I had even risked my liberty, and perhaps my life, by spying on the U.S. Government. Thousands of others had done the same thing. And for what? To establish a new privileged class in Russia?

A rage crept over me. Now for the first time I knew what I was dealing with. We had all been fooled, I cried out to myself.

Somehow I got back home, but for days I moved as if in a nightmare. My initial rage was succeeded by a frightening feeling of impotence. Like Yasha, I was caught in this ugly intrigue. There was no way out. And not only I but all my good Communist contacts, who didn't know what was going on and who relied implicitly on me. What could I do?

For the next month I continued to go down to Washington and collect material from my agents, meanwhile trying desperately to think of some plan for getting out of all this. Each time I looked at them it was a fresh

reminder that I was responsible for keeping them in this horrible affair.

Nights I couldn't sleep. I would walk the floor or go out and walk around Greenwich Village until three o'clock in the morning trying to figure a way out of the situation.

After putting out tentative feelers, I was convinced that all my Communist contacts—however loath they might be to do undercover work—were so completely saturated by Communist ideology that it would be useless to take the chance of telling them the truth. All they would do would be to go up to Communist headquarters and denounce me as a traitor.

I decided on strategy. I would slant the information I had on my contacts



to such a degree that they would look like poor risks to the Russian secret police, and perhaps they would drop them. Where they were nervous and high-strung, I reported them on the verge of cracking up. Where they had had too much open Party work in the past, I overemphasized the fact. Where they were in too close contact with dangerous elements (J. Julius Joseph had formed a friendship with an Army counterintelligence agent) I warned that the whole organization might be in peril if they were kept on.

With some of the Communists of long standing I used a different tack. I treated them as Bill had me at our first meeting, using the same brutality and the same savagery. I demanded. I threatened. I almost beat them into submission. It doesn't matter what they think about me. I decided, just so long as I save them. Let them learn what the G.P.U. is really like, I thought. Perhaps it will wake them up. If it doesn't, then there isn't any hope anyway.

Now it was getting on toward the holiday season, and I began to buy the usual Christmas presents for my people. Jack demurred at getting caviar for Earl Browder. He didn't see why the guy merited it. The Russians don't like Earl, I thought. This is only one of many indications. Obviously they think he's getting too independent. They resent his meeting with Sumner Welles at the State Department. Pretty soon they'll cut him down to size.

In Washington I handed Jack the Christmas present I had bought for him—a rather good-looking leather wallet. I was surprised at his reaction. He took it in his hands and smoothed

it lovingly. Then he said, "I've never owned anything as expensive and beautiful as this before."

The next night I had dinner with Al and gave him his present.

"The scarf is all right," he said precisely, "but the gloves are not well made."

Then after dinner he said, "We have at last decided what to do about all the contacts that Yasha Golos handled. You obviously cannot continue to handle them. The setup is too full of holes and therefore too dangerous. I'm afraid that our friend Golos was not too cautious a man, and there is the risk that you, because of your connection with him, may endanger the apparatus. You will therefore turn them over to us. We will look into their backgrounds thoroughly and decide which ones to keep."

He paused for a moment, while I stared at him with the fascinated gaze a bird gives a snake about to devour it. Then he continued. "This shift-over must be made immediately, so you will stay on as long as necessary to make the arrangements."

My brain seemed paralyzed. I stalled for time.

"But I can't, Al," I protested. "It will be impossible for me to get hold of all my contacts at such short notice—and, besides, I can't be away from the office that long."

After some argument he agreed that I was to return to New York the next morning, settle my urgent business there, return to Washington and prepare my contacts for the transfer.

This, however, was not all Al had to say to me. He had also made plans for my future. I was, he said, an excellent agent. He would like me to continue on with the G.P.U. In this case I was to sever all connections with my Russian-controlled business, the U.S. Service & Shipping Corporation, be put "on ice" for a period

"I hope that you will choose to remain with us," he said suavely. "You have an excellent record, and you can be of inestimable value to us. You are one of those rare people—an American with brains. Besides, I like you personally. I think we could work very well together."

On the train back to New York I made a sudden decision. I would leave the U.S. Service & Shipping Corporation. Then I would go on ice as Al had suggested. Little by little I would impress on the Russians that I was worn out from too much undercover work. If necessary I would put on an act and pretend that I too was cracking up. They wouldn't want to take any chances that I might fall apart and talk too much. They would probably hurriedly drop me.

Not long afterward the Russians decided it was dangerous for me to remain in the apartment where Yasha had died. They felt it must be under FBI surveillance. I was told to find another place and move as quickly as possible. I took a room in the Hotel St. George in Brooklyn.

At my next meeting with Jack he told me that he would have to leave me. From then on I would be in contact with Al alone. I was sorry to see him go, for of all the agents I had met since Yasha's death he was the most decent.

Jack looked at me wistfully. "I'm sorry to have to say goodbye," he said. "You've always brought me good luck. Twice since I've known you I've had promotions in the service, and once a medal." He stopped for a moment and then added, "But that's as far as I'll go. They say that sooner or later water reaches its own level, and I've reached mine. There isn't any further to go."

"I don't understand what you mean," I said.

He laughed bitterly. "I know our work in the United States better than anyone else, including all the big shots like Al that they send over from Moscow. I guess I'm too good. They'll probably send me to Latin America next."

So that was it. The organization didn't like people like Jack getting to be too powerful. When they became too efficient they were shifted somewhere else. For all his years of service and his good work, he was in a more precarious position than I was.

"Look here," he said abruptly, "if they want to send you to Moscow, don't go. You wouldn't like it, not after you've lived in the United States."

The more he talked, the more I wondered how I could slide out of the mess I was in. I had seen at first hand how efficiently organized the Soviet machine was, how successfully it had penetrated into even the highest places in the U.S. Government. Somehow it must be stopped, and I was in a position to contribute my little bit.

AS THE weeks rolled by I wrestled with my conscience. Should I go to the FBI and tell them all I knew about Soviet undercover work in the United States so they could break it up? No, I couldn't do that.

What about the comrades with whom I had worked in Washington? I'd have to turn them in. There was no other way to smash the Soviet machine. But they were my friends, my comrades. Together, through bad times and good, we had fought to build a better world. Then I thought, They're not my friends any more. If they knew I no longer believed with them they would denounce me as a traitor. We're in opposite camps now, I thought sadly. When the revolution comes we'll have to shoot one another.

(Continued on page 143)



of six months until they had determined that the FBI had lost all interest in me. Then I would be set up in a new "cover" business in Washington, Baltimore or Philadelphia. I would be given a new group of government contacts to take care of, probably more important than I already had. In the event I insisted on remaining with U.S. Service—which he hoped would not happen—I would be permitted to drop out of active undercover work, although I must be ready to help them at any time.

(Continued from page 141)

I began to think about what happened to an individual when he joined the Communist party. When we joined we had done so honestly. But over the long years of indoctrination we had become so warped that we were no longer true even to ourselves. I was breaking away from this perverted thinking, but the others were gradually being dragged deeper and deeper into a hell from which there was no possible escape.

If I turned them in they would no longer be useful to the Soviets. At least they would be free of any further entanglements. Perhaps they too would be able to find their way back to that integrity which they had lost while believing they still had it.

Back and forth I swayed. One day I would determine to go to the FBI. The next, I would decide I could not do it under any circumstances. I would walk night after night, unable to sleep. Then I would doze off in the early hours of the morning, awake an hour or two later dripping with sweat and in the midst of a nightmare.

Always it was the same dream, and no matter how thoroughly I awakened myself I would always go back to it. I was watching an execution. The victim was always different—sometimes it was Mary Price, sometimes Greg Silvermaster. Yet every time, I had the strange sensation that it was I who was about to die.

I became thinner, paler and tired. But I could not make up my mind. I wanted someone to force me to action. If only the FBI would arrest me!

One day I pulled myself together. There was only one thing to do. I must get out into the country and away from this problem. I must get enough rest so that I could think clearly. With this thought I packed my bags and set out for Old Lyme, a small Connecticut town.

Here, after a few short weeks, my strength started to come back—and with it my peace of mind. Living among these sturdy, solid Americans I felt my self-respect coming back.

Sometimes in the evenings I would start out along a winding road to the top of a hill, where I could look out over the town. As I watched the last rays of the sun settle on the white spire of a church, I would feel a strange sense of contentment. Alone up there, I would feel that the past ten years had been only a nightmare.

On my way back from the hill one night, I passed the Congregational Church. Almost without knowing what I was doing, I opened the door and walked in. It was quiet and peaceful inside. I sat down in a back pew, wondering just why I had come in. I found myself trying to pray—calling out for help to Someone whom all these years I had denied.

A strange sense of peace came over me. And then, in the empty church, the voice of my conscience seemed to ring out loudly: "You have no right here—yet. You know now that the way of life you have followed these last ten years was wrong. You have come back to where you belong. But first you must make amends!"

Slowly I got to my feet and walked out into the bright sunshine.

THE FBI man sat across the desk from me, his face neither hostile nor friendly. He offered me a cigarette and then settled back in his chair. I was somewhat disconcerted. Instinctively I had expected that he, like the Russian secret police, would immediately pounce on me, asking questions, demanding answers. Certainly the FBI, having taken the trouble to follow me around, must know who I was. There must be something wrong.

I had no way of knowing, of course, that the FBI was also in a predicament. Far from being unconcerned, they were startled by my sudden appearance in their offices. They were in grave doubts as to my motives. In fact, I later learned they thought I was an *agent provocateur* sent in by the Russian secret police.

As the fall wore on I paid the FBI many visits, going over the information I had in my possession. I had no idea what the FBI men thought about me personally, nor did I know what my own fate was to be. I never asked them, and they never volunteered the information. In spite of this strange relationship, I liked them. They were so very different from what I had expected.

One day one of the FBI men said, "Well, Elizabeth, now we come to the sixty-four-dollar question. Would you be willing to keep on going as you are now? It's important to us that you stay in the U. S. Service & Shipping Corporation to keep it from falling into Soviet hands. With you in there we can keep tabs on what is going on. Then too, it's vital to keep in contact with the Russian secret police and also with the people you know in the American Communist party."

I did want to get out of all this mess, but I couldn't leave with a clear conscience until every last tag end had been tied up.

"Of course," I agreed.

And so for many wearisome months I continued outwardly to lead the same life I had before, seeing the same comrades, meeting my contacts—always with the FBI tailing me.

BY LATE winter in 1947 I became definitely alarmed. The Communists had by now learned that I had talked. I began to receive mysterious telephone calls at all hours of the day and night and threatening letters.

But then things happened in rapid-fire order. The grand jury brought in indictments against the eleven Communists who composed the so-called "politburo" of the American Communist party. The next day an investigator for the Un-American Activities Committee called me. I received a subpoena to testify at hearings of the Senate Investigations Committee.

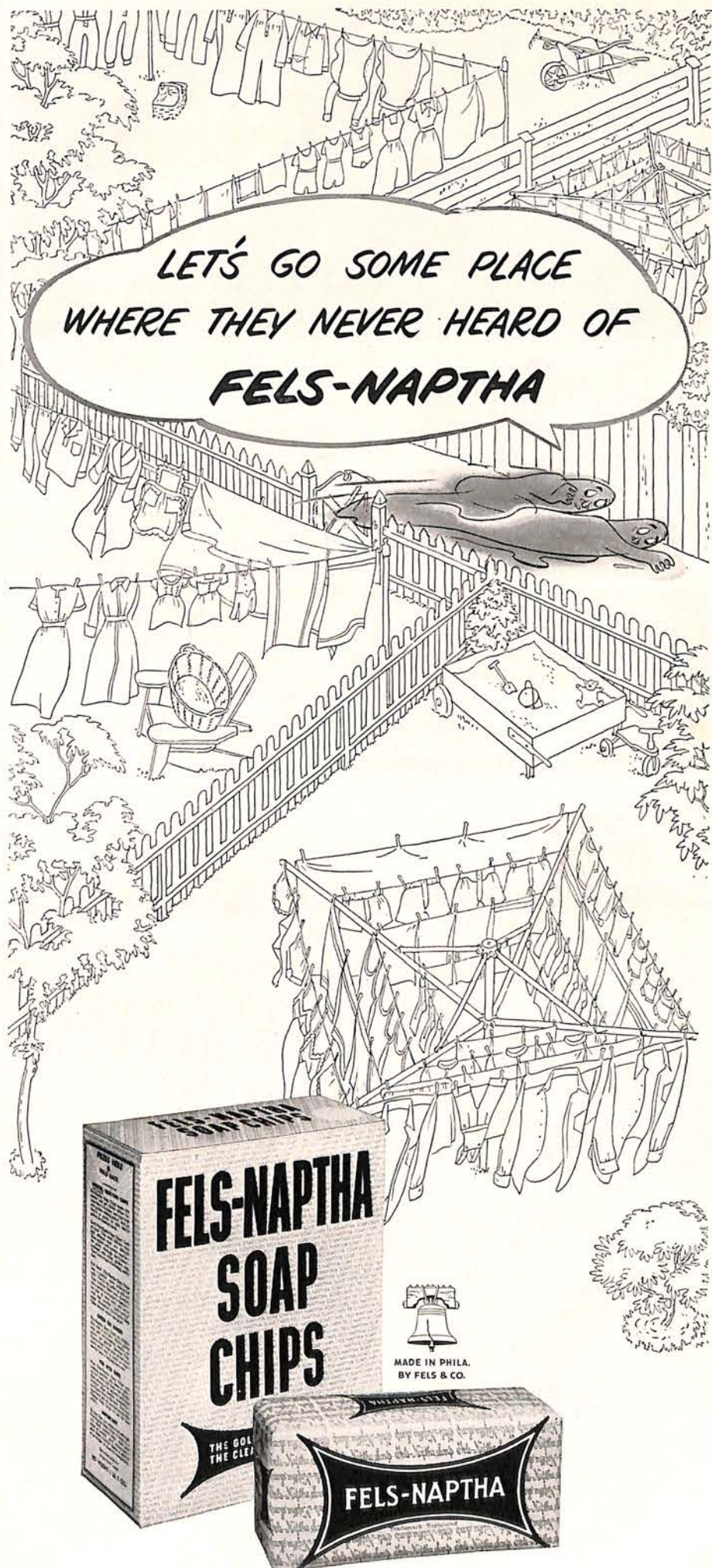
For the next few days I marveled at the pandemonium that had broken loose. The story was splashed over the front pages of the newspapers, and reporters haunted my hotel in Brooklyn. I hadn't realized the story would make such a stir. From now on I would be a notorious person—the "Red spy queen." Would there ever be any peace for me from now on?

Yet the worst ordeal of all was sitting in the committee's hearing room and watching my old comrades as they testified. As I listened to person after person, I felt sick. There's Lud Ullman, I thought. He's my age, and yet how he looks like an old man, burned out and hollow-eyed. There's Greg Silvermaster, a shell of a man. And as my eyes wandered over all of them, my horrible dream came back to me. Those were my comrades—and I was their executioner. I felt a terrible sadness.

They are spiritually dead, I thought with sudden and final release. But I am alive and I can speak for them, for all those whom I have left behind—those lost ghosts that have died for an illusion. Telling their story and mine, I will let the decent people of the world know what a monstrous thing Communism is.

THE END

Miss Bentley's life story will appear in greater detail in a book titled *Out of Bondage: My Life as a Spy*, published July 30 by Devin-Adair.



To banish "tattle-tale gray," and always have your wash look cleaner, smell cleaner and be cleaner, nothing succeeds like Fels-Naptha Soap.

FELSO, the All-Purpose White Detergent, is also made by FELS & CO.