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Bridge Of Spies



Synopsis

The dramatic events behind the Oscar-winning film, *Bridge of Spies*, tracing the paths leading to the first and most legendary prisoner exchange between East and West at Berlin's Glienicke Bridge and Checkpoint Charlie on February 10, 1962. *Bridge of Spies* is the true story of three extraordinary characters whose fate helped to define the conflicts and lethal undercurrents of the most dangerous years of the Cold War: William Fisher, alias Rudolf Abel, a British born KGB agent arrested by the FBI in New York City and jailed as a Soviet superspy for trying to steal America's most precious nuclear secrets; Gary Powers, the American U-2 pilot who was captured when his plane was shot down while flying a reconnaissance mission over the closed cities of central Russia; and Frederic Pryor, a young American graduate student in Berlin mistakenly identified as a spy, arrested and held without charge by the Stasi, East Germany's secret police. The three men were rescued against daunting odds, and then all but forgotten. Yet they laid bare the pathological mistrust that fueled the arms race for the next 30 years. Weaving the three strands of this story together for the first time, Giles Whittell masterfully portrays the intense political tensions and nuclear brinkmanship that brought the United States and Soviet Union so close to a hot war in the early 1960s. He reveals the dramatic lives of men drawn into the nadir of the Cold War by duty and curiosity, and the tragicomedy of errors that eventually induced Nikita Khrushchev to send missiles to Fidel Castro. Drawing on new interviews conducted in the United States, Europe and Russia with key players in the exchange and the events leading to it, among them Frederic Pryor himself and the man who shot down Gary Powers, *Bridge of Spies* captures a time when the fate of the world really did depend on coded messages on microdots and brave young men in pressure suits. The exchange that frigid day at two of the most sensitive points along the Iron Curtain represented the first step back from where the superpowers had stood since the building of the Berlin Wall the previous summer--on the brink of World War III.

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Customer Reviews

Interesting and grabs a hold on you. I was 12, when Powers was shot down over the Soviet Union. It was one of the first news story's that I followed closely. I also remembered when he was exchanged for Abel. I saw the movie, but only read about a third of the book, when I saw it.. The movie left out about 90 per cent of the book. It only focused on James Donovan's Abel's lawyer, working on the release. It did even mention the cancelled summit between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, after Powers was shot down. I think the movie was based on the book Mr. Donovan wrote more than this book. This book was the complete story. It starts with William Fisher aka Rudolf Abel, and tells how the failed spy was caught. It goes into about him and who he was associated with. How messages were sent to the Soviet Union. Then it tells Powers and Frederic Pryor complete stories. There is more to know than what was in the movie.

The cold war is really hard to understand. How do you explain insanity? When my son was 5 he was interested in submarines. I told him that his grandfather drove one. He asked my what was he doing? I explained that he was waiting for the president to send a message to blow up the world. His puzzled look was priceless. This book goes a long way to explain that insanity, and how that insane game was played. Well written. Very, very well researched. Complementary to the movie. Book and movie both highly recommended.

I was amazed by the details in this book. It can get a little confusing as the author is tracking different story lines that converge into one spy exchange. However putting all this information (which has been out there for a while) into one book gives a remarkable vantage point to see how the Cold

War developed. I lived through this time period with my own assumptions about what occurred and it is refreshing to get a whole new vantage point on that history. It challenges you on what happened and, ultimately, it also challenges you on what is happening today.

Not only a good read, this is a peek into the background shenanigans that typified the Cold War. With a cast of characters that include Nikita Krushchev, Dwight Eisenhower and of course, Francis Gary Powers and his ill-fated U-2 spy mission, plus a sterling cast of CIA characters, the story that unfolds is a quick and entertaining history lesson. It is well researched and it is one of those historical revelations that sometimes bewilders the reader. Even students who don't like history should find this story intriguing.

I remember going outside with my parents to look at Sputnik as it speed through the night sky. I remember doing duck and cover drills in school. I remember the tension in the air all during my preteen years. This book brought back the feelings and helped me understand what was happening at that time from a current perspective. The structure of the book was a little confusing at times. I felt that the writing was hasty at some points but the story did bring the period to life.

Detailed narrative of the background personalities of the 3 exchanged personalities during the Cold War, but curiously did not delve extensively on the lawyer for Rudolph Abel unlike in the movie where it was all about Tom Hanks. But it was interesting to know the circumstances, the situation then between the two top heads of the two powerful countries, as it were playing chess guessing each other's next move in the race for superiority in warfare.

First saw the movie and then read the book. The book really flushed out more detail, especially about the U2 flights and the cover-up within the CIA. Also, very interesting facts about the Russian spy, especially that he was not the "super spy" as portrayed by the government during his trial.

This book is an interesting dissertation of the political environment somewhat globally during the Cold War. I wanted to read it to better understand the story told in the movie. The reality is that 90% of the book is telling the story of the times, only 10% of the tale is about the release of the spies. At times it feels like too much political information, I was just surprised at the detail the author went into. If the reader wanted more knowledge of the Cold War, this would be a good book to read.

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