

# Dieter Felix Gerhardt: A Case Study of Russian Espionage in South Africa

Henning van Aswegen<sup>356</sup>   
*Independent Researcher*

---

## Abstract

My contestation in this research article is that Dieter Felix Gerhardt, a South African naval officer based in Simon's Town, was a paid penetration agent for the Russian Military Intelligence Service, *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije*, in the South African Defence Force. This contestation cannot be accepted as true without due scientific investigation and analysis by way of a case study as my primary research method. For this case study on Dieter Felix Gerhardt and his wife, Ruth Johr, exploratory research was not necessary or attempted, because the phenomena of espionage, intelligence services, and counterintelligence exist in sovereign countries (mostly by way of legislation), as elements and instruments of government structures and policy. The case study on Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr was approached from the perspective of intelligence studies; therefore, the intelligence terminology and nomenclature used will be defined, explained, and referenced.

**Keywords:** Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr, Espionage Recruitment Methods, Intelligence Targets, Clandestine Communications, Psychology of Espionage, Counterintelligence and Counterespionage, Tradecraft.

## Introduction

Intelligence Science is the study of the intelligence process, tradecraft, jargon, terminology, cryptonyms, abbreviations and usage of intelligence and espionage.<sup>357</sup> It is the theoretical analysis of intelligence and espionage within the context of threat perception, international relations and strategy, political science, human security, social security and national security. 'Intelligence Studies is research into the intelligence process itself: analysis and estimates, clandestine collection, espionage, counterintelligence and covert action.'<sup>358</sup>

In the study reported here, my objective was to provide a scientific description of the phenomenon of intelligence and the conditions under which espionage was used by the Russian government to obtain military information on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the South African Defence Force (SADF). In this study, I investigate how the Russian military intelligence service, GRU, was able to recruit and handle Dieter Gerhardt and his wife and courier, Ruth Johr, who were not double agents,<sup>359</sup> but who were willingly and wittingly engaged in the conduct of espionage.

## Background

In *Research Methods*, Dane defines a case study as ‘involving a series of intensive, in-depth observations; and many of those observations may provide information that can be used to rule out additional alternative observations’.<sup>360</sup> For this current study, I have used the case study single participant design, i.e. Dieter Felix Gerhardt as the single participant in one espionage operation over a specific, extended period, 1963–1983. An independent variable in the case study model (in this case, Dieter Felix Gerhardt’s conviction and prison sentence for espionage), stands alone, uninfluenced and unchanged by any other variables that a scientist or writer is trying to measure and analyse. Discussing the value of the case study method in political science, Viotti and Kauppi augment Dane’s model by stating ‘the independent variable is useful in explaining some outcomes, but not all outcomes. Dependent variables are simply what one is trying to explain – they are characteristics of a subject that may take on different qualitative or quantitative values.’<sup>361</sup>

The practical application of the dependent variable in this article comprised an intensive study over time, rather than a single observation. In this case study, Dieter Felix Gerhardt’s actions and conduct over a period of twenty years, 1963–1983, were analysed and measured as a successful or unsuccessful intelligence operation. A dependent variable (sometimes called an outcome variable) – in this case, the decisions, conduct, actions and behaviour of Dieter Felix Gerhardt – is the object being measured and dependent upon the value of other variables. In this specific instance, the case study research model was similar to the behaviourist political science model, defined by Bekker as the empirical emphasis on verifiable facts.<sup>362</sup> Both models allow for the measurement of the conduct of political actors, rather than only the institutions or organisations within which they operate.

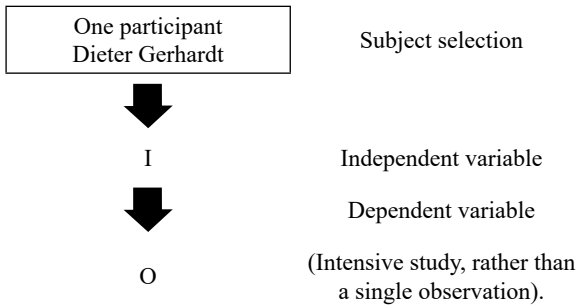


Figure 1: Dane’s single participant case study in design notation. Because there is only one participant, no group numbers are assigned to either the independent or the dependent variable.<sup>363</sup>

## Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this illustrative case study was to conduct a detailed, holistic investigation into the espionage activities of Dieter Felix Gerhardt, and his Swiss-born wife, Ruth

Johr. The secondary purpose of the case study was to analyse the motivation and reasons, advanced by Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr themselves during their high treason court case in Cape Town, for becoming GRU spies in the SADF.

I have compared Dane and Soy's case study models of research, and they differ in that Soy places a strong emphasis on the collection of primary data on the single participant in the case study, whereas Dane emphasises the importance of both the dependent and independent variables present in the data-gathering and studying process.<sup>364</sup> Both Dane and Soy however agree that the purpose of the study should be concise, and clearly and briefly defined. Grossman further distinguishes between different types of case studies, noting that local knowledge can be used by researchers when a certain amount of information is already known about the subject matter, and the researcher has personal knowledge and experience to contribute to the research article. The purpose of the study can then be pursued accurately by way of illustration, which is descriptive in nature of an incident or identified situation being studied to unearth new, previously undisclosed information.

### **Espionage Literature and Research Material**

Apart from one interview with Media 24 journalist André Pretorius on 12 November 2011, Dieter Gerhardt refused to talk about the spying incident in which he and his wife, Ruth Johr, participated.<sup>365</sup> One of the South African Police Security Branch (SAP-SB) investigators in the case, Major General Herman Stadler, released a brief two-page statement to *Nongqai Magazine* on the Gerhardt incident, a copy of which has been obtained for this research article.<sup>366</sup> The other two primary sources of original documentation accessible were the court documents of the case, and an interview the researcher conducted with a former head of the CI/CE Chief Directorate of the South African (SA) intelligence services.<sup>367</sup> This person was one of the investigation team members of the SA government, following Dieter Gerhardt's arrest on 8 January 1983. However, Judge JP Munnik, of the Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division, ruled by order of the court dated 5 September 1983, that the court case be held in camera and the court records be sealed. Judge Munnik said in court that he was invoking the provisions of Section 153(1) of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977, to make this ruling and order.<sup>368</sup>

Second-hand research material, consisting of opinions, interpretations, and commentary by politicians, journalists, writers, and researchers who were not members of intelligence services or the investigating team or who had no first-hand knowledge, expertise or experience of either espionage or intelligence science or of the Gerhardt case in particular, were not considered for this case study.

### **Problem Statement**

The research problem I sought to address in this case study, was the public statement made by Dieter Felix Gerhardt to Media24 on 12 November 2011, that he became a Russian spy for ideological reasons, and the contradictory court verdict at his high treason case, which found and stated that he became a Russian spy for monetary gain.



To gain a fuller understanding of why this discrepancy matters, a case study of in-depth research focused on the conduct and espionage activities of Dieter Gerhardt, and his wife Ruth Johr, was needed.

## Research Objectives

The primary research objective of this case study was to determine the reasons why Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr became GRU spies in the SADF, to assess Dieter Gerhardt's access to intelligence targets, and to analyse the damage that was done by their spying activities.

The secondary objective was to track Dieter Felix Gerhardt's meteoric rise in the SADF, from liaison officer with the SA weapons procurement corporation, to head of the Simon's Town Naval Base, and how he started spying for GRU, the Russian military intelligence service.<sup>369</sup> To explain the espionage activities of Dieter Felix Gerhardt from 1963 to 1983, and those of his wife Ruth Johr from 1968 to 1983, I applied an illustrative case study research model for analysis and measurement of conduct, decisions and behaviour.<sup>370</sup>

## The Geopolitical Context

The Dieter Gerhardt espionage incident took place during the Cold War – a sustained period of conflict and tension starting in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, and ending in 1989 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Holsti defines the Cold War as follows: 'The most pervasive and consistent conflict in the global system has been the competition, struggle, and occasional crisis between the socialist regimes of the East and the private enterprise, constitutional democracies of the West.'<sup>371</sup> Before the eras of *détente* and peaceful co-existence, the Cold War was characterised by an arms race between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, consisting of most member countries of the (former) Soviet Union. Camilleri and Falk say that the Cold War era provided the East-West power block and superpowers (the United States and Russia), 'with a pretext for maintaining and extending their respective spheres of influence in the Third World'.<sup>372</sup> South Africa is generally regarded as a pro-Western democracy in Africa, and one could therefore argue that the country broadly fell within Camilleri and Falk's definition of the Third World.<sup>373</sup>

Viotti and Kauppi<sup>374</sup> argue that the clash between Western and Eastern civilisations, or democratic–capitalist countries versus autocratic–socialist countries, embodied in the Soviet Union, were none more visible than in the nuclear arms race and between the intelligence services of those countries. Lowenthal states, 'the prosecution of the Cold War was a major defining factor in the development of the most basic forms of practices of espionage and counterespionage'.<sup>375</sup>

The predecessor to GRU, the Cheka, was established in 1918 by Leon Trotsky (born Lev Davidovich Bronstein), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Minister of Foreign Affairs, immediately after the November 1917 Bolshevik revolution.<sup>376</sup> The Cheka existed for eighteen years, gaining a reputation as a particularly ruthless and oppressive internal intelligence service, before being replaced by GRU in 1942.<sup>377</sup> GRU is the leading Russian government organisation responsible for managing military espionage operations and military intelligence, and for advising the government on military strategy and preparedness.<sup>378</sup>



GRU is also tasked by the Russian government with military, economic and technological security and counterespionage.<sup>379</sup> Similar to the Soviet-era Russian Committee for State Security, the KGB<sup>380</sup> members of GRU were hard-core Chekists called “siloviki” – dedicated, ruthless communists who enforced the authority of the new Bolshevik government in Russia.<sup>381</sup> During the Cold War, the GRU had more personnel and agents on its books than the KGB.<sup>382</sup>

## Gerhardt’s Background and Upbringing

Dieter Felix Gerhardt started his career in the SA Navy (SAN) as a sea cadet (“a boy seaman”) in 1952 and his career as a Russian spy in 1963. Magnus Malan, the former head of the SADF and the South African Minister of Defence from 1980–1994, states in his book, *My life in the SA Defence Force*, that Dieter Gerhardt was predisposed towards spying, because –

He was a difficult character since childhood – his whole life consisted of rebellion. As a member of a German-speaking family, he was opposed to the English; he rebelled against his father; as a declared agnostic he rebelled against the church; and eventually, he also rebelled against the political dispensation.<sup>383</sup>

Gerhardt’s background (he was born on 1 November 1935), gave no indication or premonition of his later espionage activities. His German immigrant parents were middle-class and supporters of the South African Nationalist government. Gerhardt’s father, Alfred Edgard Gerhardt was arrested during the Second World War, accused of being pro-German and an enemy of the state by the pro-British Smuts government. Alfred Gerhardt was incarcerated by the Smuts government at the Koffiefontein concentration camp in the Orange Free State, together with a motley combination of Afrikaner Nationalists, anti-Smuts agitators and Nazi sympathisers. When sent home after the war, Alfred was an embittered man, carrying a grudge against the Smuts government, which led to his divorce from his wife, Julia.<sup>384</sup> Rumours of vehicle theft and delinquent misdemeanours plagued the Gerhardt family, after which Alfred asked Commodore (later Rear-Admiral SC Biermann) to arrange for young Dieter to be accepted into the SAN in 1954 as a sea cadet.<sup>385</sup> Magnus Malan writes in his autobiography that Biermann told of how Dieter’s father pleaded with him to accept his difficult son into the Navy. Gerhardt senior asked Biermann to ‘take him under your wing, so that he can learn some discipline’.

Dieter Gerhardt was tall for his age, ungainly and somewhat clumsy, earning him the nickname “Jumbo” among his classmates.<sup>386</sup> At the conclusion of his training in Simon’s Town in 1956, Gerhardt was awarded the Sword of Honour as the best student on the training course for sea cadets.

Gerhardt matriculated in the SAN and then embarked on what can generally be described as a naval engineering career. From 1954 to 1958, Gerhardt was assigned to the Engineers Division of the Navy, attending a Qualifying Course in Basic Engineering with the Royal Navy in Cyprus, before being appointed Chief Engineer, SAS Natal. He was sent to the



Royal Naval Engineering College in Plymouth, England for further training as a submarine specialist – a particular honour for young SA personnel. Subsequently, Gerhardt also attended engineering training courses in Cyprus and Iceland, before returning to England from September 1962 to May 1964, to attend the Royal Navy Weapons Electrical Course (UK). During his stay in England in 1958, the 23-year-old Gerhardt met and married Janet Coggin, then 21 years old.<sup>387</sup>

## Recruitment as a Spy

In this new chapter of his life, Dieter Gerhardt the spy would be born. According to an interview conducted with Janet Coggin forty years later, the handsome and gregarious Gerhardt was popular amongst his friends and her family.<sup>388</sup> After the birth of their first child, Annemarie Julia, the Gerhardts returned to South Africa, first settling in Simon's Town and then Noordhoek. Their second child, Ingrid, was born there in 1960.<sup>389</sup> Once again returning to South Africa after his training courses abroad, Gerhardt was appointed Engineering Officer of the *SAS President Kruger* in 1965, and he remained here until 1967. In 1968, Gerhardt was sent to Naval Headquarters in Pretoria, to undergo a Staff Officer Technical Training course, after which he was appointed Senior Technical Inspection Officer.

Dieter Gerhardt was not recruited as a spy in a conventional way; he was a walk-in spy who willingly and wittingly offered his services to a foreign intelligence service.<sup>390</sup>

Dieter Gerhardt alleged to government investigators in 1983 that he contacted senior members of the South African Communist Party (SACP), as a 25-year-old in 1960.<sup>391</sup> This statement was seriously doubted by National Intelligence Service (NIS) investigators during their questioning of Gerhardt after his arrest and was rejected by the judge in his verdict after Gerhardt's high treason trial in Cape Town. At the time (1963), the South African Security Police and Republican Intelligence were still in the process of identifying the senior members of the SACP, all of whom were in Johannesburg.<sup>392</sup> Gerhardt could not provide the date when he allegedly travelled to Johannesburg, where he stayed, or how he knew which members of the communist party to contact.<sup>393</sup> Gerhardt said that he informed the SACP that he wanted to do his part in the struggle against apartheid and that Bram Fischer, then leader of the SACP, had relayed his personal particulars to members of the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU.<sup>394</sup> Gerhardt could not explain how the communists reacted when he, a serving naval officer, approached them out of the blue, or why they would take him seriously. Nor could he explain when and where this alleged meeting took place. To this day, Gerhardt claims an ideological reason for his spying against Western interests, a claim which, according to a former head of SA counterintelligence, is 'a fabrication'.<sup>395</sup> Prior to approaching the Russian embassy in London as a walk-in, Gerhardt approached the US embassy in London to sell SA secrets to them.<sup>396</sup> When rejected, he approached the Russians who were at first very apprehensive and disbelieving of the young SA walk-in. It was only during a second visit at which Gerhardt produced numerous classified documents and material that the Russians became more accommodating and eager for his services. During this second visit to the embassy, the Russians realised that they had struck gold. The well-known human



intelligence (HUMINT) weakness, or perhaps a profound miscalculation about the value of this walk-in South African, had dire consequences for the shared geo-political interests of NATO, the United States and South Africa.<sup>397</sup> ‘Gerhardt had extensive knowledge of South Africa’s defence strategy, the country’s ties with Britain, the USA and NATO and South Africa’s nuclear programme, which was developed with American assistance.’<sup>398</sup> The SA military analyst Al J. Venter states:

For many years South Africa was regarded as the responsible party for the Southern flank of NATO – a very real arrangement, although it was never formalised – and the South African government made full use of the unspoken special relationship as its isolation deepened.<sup>399</sup>

Gerhardt was a spy who fell into the lap of the Soviets in London, while undergoing training as a member of the SAN at the Maritime Warfare School of the British Navy in 1963. After walking into the Russian Embassy in London and offering his services, Gerhardt was told to come back within one month with proof of his access to secrets and documents. A month later Gerhardt returned to the Russian Embassy, bearing gifts in the form of secret documents relating to the design of Britain’s navy missile system. The Royal Navy completely trusted the young naval officer from South Africa on their training courses, and gave him unprecedented access to some of their most sensitive warfare systems – information he duly passed on to his Russian controllers.<sup>400</sup> Gerhardt handed the Russians copies of some of the manuals and documents he obtained while undergoing training at the Maritime Warfare School and therefore originally sold British, not SA, secrets to the Russians. The fact that Gerhardt sold British secrets and documents to the Russians was a nail in the coffin of his ANC-SACP-Apartheid motivation story. The information contained in these documents convinced the Russians to appoint Gerhardt as their spy – his only request being that they pay him for his services.

For the Russians, Gerhardt was an unexpected gift and they appointed him under the codename “Felix” (his middle name). During his spying career, Gerhardt would at times use the pseudonyms “Pilyatsky B. Felix”, “Felix” or “DFG”. Gerhardt eagerly started stealing British and SAN documents and continued this nefarious practise for the rest of his 18-month sojourn in England. The quality of the documents Gerhardt provided to the Russians in England quickly made him one of their most valuable military spies.<sup>401</sup>

## **RU Training and Instructions**

Upon conclusion of his training in 1963, Gerhardt left on a ski vacation in Switzerland, but instead travelled secretly to the Soviet Union to undergo intensive espionage training. Gerhardt flew to Moscow with his SA passport via Vienna, Austria and Budapest, Romania. In Moscow, the GRU showed Gerhardt how to use miniature spy cameras, how to develop the film and convert them into microscopic negatives, to be placed in and on letters that could be sent from a normal post box. Gerhardt received intensive training in the use of miniature photographic equipment, observation and evasion methods, how to use disguises, the manufacturing of false passports and espionage techniques. The GRU and his newly appointed handler, Gregori Shirobokov, also trained Gerhardt in Morse

code, counter-surveillance techniques, ways to handle questioning and interrogation, and how to beat polygraph tests.<sup>402</sup> To protect his identity, the Russians took multiple photos of Gerhardt in various guises to use in false passports and to use as false identities. These photos would come in handy should Gerhardt be caught or exposed as a spy by SA authorities, necessitating an escape.<sup>403</sup>

The interest of the Soviet Union in South African nuclear power development was Gerhardt's primary instruction and intelligence-gathering request from the GRU. The development of nuclear weapons by South Africa at Pelindaba en Velindaba, west of Pretoria, was Gerhardt's biggest and continuing intelligence-gathering instruction from his Russian masters for his 20 years as a spy. During his spying career, Gerhardt photographed manuals of secret NATO and SA military weaponry and wrote confidential reports on the South African nuclear development programme and domestic political situation, including economic growth data, and South Africa's bilateral and multilateral foreign relations.

### **'We know there is a spy, but who is spying?'**

Unbeknown to Gerhardt and the GRU, standard intelligence indications came to the attention of the British intelligence services that the Russians had access to specific classified military information. The information and realisation did not come from a defector or agent in place, but rather from routine CI/CE deductive analysis. The realisation that someone, somewhere with access to NATO and concomitant military documents was active and spying, triggered a hunt for a mole in Britain. Dieter Gerhardt was not a suspect at that time; the British were focused on finding one of their own. The initial, cursory investigation into the information leakage and loss in Britain revealed only a relatively low-level agent. Subsequently, the information loss continued, so a new hunt for a mole commenced under deep cover, so as not to alert the Russians or the active spy.

Despite the fact that Magnus Malan, the former Commanding Officer of the SADF and Minister of Defence, writes in his autobiography that the SADF became aware of a security breach at the arms procurement company ARMSCOR in 1973, Gerhardt continued spying for the GRU for ten more years. In the end, Dieter Gerhardt was identified and compromised not by the SADF and its Directorate Military Intelligence, but by a foreign intelligence service, the French DST.<sup>404</sup>

### **Ruth Johr, Gerhardt's Wife and Support Agent**

In her book, *The Spy's Wife*, Janet Coggin says that Gerhardt told her during their marriage that he was a Russian spy and that she was shocked by his revelation. The journalist Jonathan Ancer states in his book, *Betrayal: The Secret Lives of Apartheid Spies*, Gerhardt confessed his spying to Coggin in 1966, during an outing to Newlands Forest on the slopes of Table Mountain. Coggin accused Gerhardt of trying to recruit her as co-spy and collaborator, something she refused to do.<sup>405</sup> Following his confession to her, Coggin, by now the mother of three young daughters, developed an intense disapproval and distrust of her husband. Eventually, Coggin and her three daughters left South Africa and settled in Ireland. Coggin and Gerhardt were officially divorced in 1967.<sup>406</sup> According to Coggin,





Gerhardt was an egoist, a 'traditional apartheid-accepting South African' for whom money, rather than ideological conviction, was the driving force for his spying.<sup>407</sup> Coggin says she was unaware of the extent of her husband's spying, assuming he was just an overly ambitious officer in the SAN.<sup>408</sup> Coggin did not know that Gerhardt's first contact with the Russians took place under her and her parents' noses in England and that he had also approached the Americans to spy for them.

In 1969, while on a skiing holiday at the luxury Klosters Ski Resort in Switzerland, Dieter Gerhardt met his second wife, Ruth Johr. Gerhardt and Johr got married about nine months later, on 15 September 1969. At this time, Gerhardt seemed to be completely unaware of Johr's own spying activities on behalf of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (East Germany).<sup>409</sup> In a later media interview, Gerhardt said about Johr:

When we met, I told her my views about the apartheid regime. Before the wedding, I learned about her family background and her views, and I knew that the struggle against apartheid was in line with her opinions. Nevertheless, we – Gregori Shirobokov (Gerhardt's GRU-handler), and I – decided to let her in on the secret in stages. Each time I would unravel another part of the picture until I told her the whole truth.<sup>410</sup>

During a visit to Moscow in January 1970, the GRU instructed Gerhardt to take Johr into his confidence and tell her everything. Gerhardt did precisely that. Also, ironically, during a visit to Newlands Forest adjacent to Table Mountain in Cape Town. In response, and in all probability on instructions of the Ministry for State Security (STASI), Johr told Gerhardt about her own spying activities on behalf of the Soviet Union. East Germany was, at that time, part of the Soviet Union, and the intelligence services of all member states, including the GRU and the STASI, worked together on mutual intelligence operations. With these revelations, an unbreakable bond between Gerhardt and Johr formed, because they were now not only spying for the same spymasters, but also for each other's benefit. Johr agreed to become involved in spying, together with Gerhardt, for the GRU.<sup>411</sup> The time frame of the Gerhardt couple's espionage is relevant here, because of the Soviet Union's stated aim of attaining 'competitive military equality' with the West by way of political and military infiltration of independent states in Africa.<sup>412</sup>

Dieter Gerhardt's rise in the ranks culminated in his appointment as Senior Staff Officer of Force Development at the SAN Headquarters in Pretoria. On 1 March 1977, Gerhardt was promoted to the management position of Director Naval Engineering, in Pretoria, giving him even more access to classified information and files. At the height of Gerhardt's spying activities in 1977, the two superpowers of the world, the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective sets of supporter states, were deeply involved in the Cold War.<sup>413</sup>

This arrangement between Gerhardt and Johr, plus the fact that they were now married, fitted the GRU like a glove. Their marriage provided plausible cover for both the spy and his courier, as well as plausible deniability because they provided each other with alibis when necessary.<sup>414</sup> In Johr, Gerhardt now had an ideal courier, with no further need to make use of intermediaries to post or send letters and information to the Soviet Union.



Johr would regularly travel to Switzerland, under the guise of visiting her family and then deposit information, reports, military documents, and microfilms in dead letter drops or post boxes obtained in Geneva for exactly this purpose. Johr had a convenient, believable cover story and nobody, particularly the SA Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), questioned her regular forays to Europe and meeting places like Madagascar, Norway, France and Spain.

Shortly after their conspiratorial discussion at Newlands Forest, Johr travelled to Geneva and on to Moscow for extended training by the GRU. Here, Johr, under the codename “Lina” received training in espionage techniques, tradecraft, counter-surveillance and evasion and the manner to act as a courier and support agent for her husband Dieter. On her regular visits to Switzerland, Johr would deposit documents stolen from the SAN in secret post boxes in either Geneva or Zürich, where the GRU would unload the boxes and send the information back to GRU headquarters in Moscow.<sup>415</sup> Johr faithfully and obediently supported her husband in all his spying endeavours, earning the couple huge amounts of money paid by a grateful GRU for their treason. However, in Simon’s Town and in Pretoria, the Gerhardts’ lavish lifestyle, opulent furniture and frequent ski holidays to Switzerland started to raise suspicions. The questions were often deflected by Gerhardt explaining that his wife Ruth had very rich family in Switzerland. Gerhardt lied to other inquisitive townsfolk by saying that his parents were very rich or that he had inherited a lot of money.<sup>416</sup> Most of the money paid to Gerhardt and Johr was safely deposited in a secret Swiss bank account.<sup>417</sup> Johr admitted to this fact in her statement, submitted to the court by her legal counsel in Case SS239/83.<sup>418</sup>

Under questioning from Lieutenant Denise Benson of the SAP-SB during the investigation phase, Ruth Johr readily admitted that she acted as a courier for her husband. “Lina” helped Gerhardt and the GRU from the date of her marriage to Gerhardt in September 1969 and continued faithfully for thirteen long years. During this time, Johr twice visited the Soviet Union (officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR), where she underwent intensive GRU training to perform the duties of a courier and liaison officer and a radio operator–cryptographer receiving one-way radio broadcasts from the GRU. Ruth confessed to travelling to Switzerland 21 times since 1969 to deliver film and documents to the Russians. Most of these meetings and contact consisted of dead drops, post boxes and brush meetings.<sup>419</sup> Gerhardt, Johr, Gregori Shirobokov and Vitaly Shlikov used “accidental bumping” or “fleetingly passing each other” techniques to exchange espionage materials and/or briefcases. GRU preferred this method of exchange with Gerhardt and Johr to minimise the possibility that their communication network may be exposed by a defector. Johr sat on pre-arranged park benches, at bus stops, and on benches in the train stations of Geneva and Zürich with a briefcase containing the films and stolen documents. Shlikov would sit next to her momentarily, with an identical briefcase, which he left behind when departing with Johr’s briefcase. During these brush meetings, no words or even glances were exchanged between Johr and Shlikov, just the transfer of money, copied documents and films took place. Some of the money Johr received from Shirobokov and Shlikov was hidden in false compartments of briefcases and travel bags. Johr demonstrated to investigators how the brush meetings in Switzerland took place, and the investigators made a training video of her demonstrated actions and procedures.



Investigators, ironically, named the video *Tools of the Trade*.<sup>420</sup> Ruth brought information back from Switzerland and Moscow to Gerhardt, which was important for the proper functioning on their clandestine communications apparatus, for example schedules for radio transmissions and details of future meeting places.

That Ruth Johr (alias “Lin” or “Lyn”), using her Swiss passport No 0365237, was one of the best GRU couriers ever, is not doubted. Her cover story for travelling to Switzerland to meet with the family was only part of the cover story and nobody in the NIS (National Intelligence Service), SAP-SB, CIA (*Central Intelligence Agency*) and SIS (Secret Intelligence Service) ever ascertained the other part of the cover story.

The Russian newspaper *Izvestia* reported as follows on the Gerhardt-Johr spy case:

Despite her trials during the investigation, trial and long imprisonment, ‘Lina’ retained warm memories of trips with ‘Felix’ to the USSR, about the GRU employees who worked there with her. She told fellow inmates at the Pretoria Central Prison that she did not regret that she helped her husband fulfil her obligations to the GRU. She gave her consent to participate in this Felix espionage operation, without hesitation, infinitely believing him and his cause. Her love and trust in him, was the one philosophical factor that defined her life.<sup>421</sup>

Gerhardt’s career in the SAN flourished, giving him ever-increasing access to information and documents that could be valuable to the Russians. In 1972, the Russian spy was promoted to Senior Staff Officer of the Commanding Officer of the SADF in Pretoria. Gerhardt was now the liaison officer of the SADF with its principal weapons supplier, ARMSCOR, the Armaments Development Corporation of South Africa. As a statutory body, ARMSCOR developed and managed South Africa’s independent arms industry and arms procurement for the SADF. In his new post, Gerhardt had direct and unrestricted access to not only top-secret SA military documents, but also NATO documents. Because he was the ARMSCOR naval liaison officer, Gerhardt was informed and knew that the SA Atomic Energy Corporation acquired gun barrels from the SAN to build nuclear devices at Pelindaba and test them at the Vastrap underground facility in the Northern Cape.<sup>422</sup>

By 1982, Dieter Gerhardt and his courier Ruth Johr became nervous and paranoid, believing that they were being followed and that they were witnessing signs of surveillance. Gerhardt’s GRU handler, Gregori Shirobokov, demanded more and more information from the Gerhardts, demands they were struggling to meet because of Dieter’s weakened position as head of the Simon’s Town dockyard and subsequent reduced access to high-grade secret military documents. The Directorate: Military Intelligence (DMI) never shared their findings or reports of Magnus Malan’s concerns about Dieter Felix Gerhardt with the SA civilian intelligence service. If, as Gerhardt was worried about, he was under surveillance or investigation in 1982, then it would have been by the DMI and not the NIS.<sup>423</sup>

At the end of 1982, Dieter Gerhardt was informed by the SAN that he was scheduled to attend a further training course in the United States at Syracuse University, New York.



Gerhardt later told counter-intelligence investigators:

My nerves were *kaput* (exhausted) in that period. The situation seriously affected my relations with Ruth. On the night before the trip, we had a terrible quarrel. She demanded that I not go. I demanded that she leave South Africa. We parted with a slamming of the door. At JF Kennedy Airport, I noticed the passport control official noting something after checking my passport. I can read upside down, and I understood he was marking me as problematic. The game had begun.<sup>424</sup>

If this statement of Gerhardt is true, it begs the question why a professional spy, already believing that he was receiving unwanted attention, and realising that immigration officials were taking note of his arrival, would not make urgent plans to warn his handler and make good his escape? In 1982, a further indication surfaced in France that a high-level spy on behalf of the Russians was functioning within NATO or the military establishments of Western powers. A Russian agent in place had offered his services to the French, providing information on documents that crossed his desk. The information was standard-type source reports, but with the source thereof unidentified. The agent in place did not work at a particular desk or geographical area, so it took a very long time to determine the likely country and probable area in the country where the information was being collected. The reports contained references to military, air force and naval intelligence, but were too vague to pinpoint Simon's Town in South Africa.

### **Gerhardt and Jahr's Arrest: The Farewell Dossier**

Dieter Gerhardt left South Africa on Pan American Flight PA181 from Johannesburg to JF Kennedy Airport in New York, for a three-week engineering mathematics course at Syracuse University. Both the plane ticket and the study course had been paid for by the SADF, and Gerhardt would receive a generous daily living allowance while in the United States. Gerhardt then took an expensive New York Helicopter Flight HD135 from JF Kennedy Airport to Newark Airport, and from there Allegheny Airlines Flight AC3321 to Syracuse.<sup>425</sup> Gerhardt had planned to leave Syracuse on 24 January 1982, and had booked an open ticket from New York to Cardiff, Wales, via London, and/or New York to Geneva, Switzerland. Because of his arrest in New York on 8 January 1983, these flights did not happen, and it is unclear whether an already suspicious and paranoid Gerhardt had planned the flights as part of his escape route.

The identity of Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Jahr as witting<sup>426</sup> GRU agents was compromised in the Farewell Dossier, given to the French counterintelligence service DST (*Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire*) by a witting agent-in-place in the KGB.

The identity of the Russian agent in place was Vladimir Vetrov, codename "Farewell", working for the French internal intelligence service, the DST. Farewell did not identify Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Jahr by name, but the dossier he compiled of four hundred Russian spies present and active in Western democracies, contributed to the hunt for the mole within the Western military establishment and specifically the SADF. The South



African Intelligence Services since 1963, Republican Intelligence (RI), the Department of National Security (DoNS), and the NIS maintained liaison relations with the French DST since 1964, through the channels of NIS counterintelligence (CI) and the service's Regional Representative in Paris, France. Based on the information provided by Farewell in the Farewell Dossier, the DST advised the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that they had uncovered information about a Russian spy in the American military, not an SA spy. This information was not passed on by the DST to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), or the MI5 (internal intelligence service), or the SIS (external intelligence service) of Britain, but only to the FBI because of its counterintelligence responsibility and capabilities.<sup>427</sup>

On 8 January 1983, one week after Gerhardt's arrival in the United States (on 3 January), agents from the CIA, FBI and SIS entered his hotel room in New York and arrested the SA spy. A roll of film, containing information gathered by Gerhardt, was found in his possession. American intelligence services believe in polygraph tests, and subjected Gerhardt to such a test almost immediately after his arrest. Gerhardt later told SA investigators that his FBI, CIA and SIS interrogators in New York were never very polite to him, and that he hated them as much as they hated him. Gerhardt said that he has never forgiven the FBI, CIA and SIS for the way he was treated and interrogated. They believed he was an ultimate traitor, without a shred of dignity or honour and ruthless to boot – giving away anybody's and everybody's secrets and doing so for money. Gerhardt admitted to his FBI, CIA and SIS interrogators that the Russians had provided him with a list of intelligence requirements and pressurised him to provide actionable and useable intelligence. Gerhardt told the interrogators that he spent up to 45 hours per week on his spying activities, even more than his normal working hours as an SAN officer.<sup>428</sup>

One week after his arrest in New York, Dieter Gerhardt was escorted onto an SA-bound flight and handed over to two SA intelligence officials at Jan Smuts International Airport.<sup>429</sup> Gerhardt was worried about his future and the fate awaiting him upon his return to South Africa, 'I felt like a dead man walking. It was clear to me that a death penalty awaited me in South Africa.'<sup>430</sup> Colonel Hans Gloy and Major Frik Nel re-arrested Gerhardt and escorted him to Pretoria Central Prison.

On the same day of his return to South Africa on 8 January 1983, Gerhardt's wife Ruth Johr was arrested at the couples' luxury home in Simon's Town. Neighbours of the Gerhardts later told investigators that Ruth was a well-liked and friendly person, although they never saw Dieter Gerhardt in the neighbourhood. When asked about their opulent lifestyle, Johr would often remark that Dieter's parents were very well off, while Gerhardt would jokingly refer to Johr's very rich family in Switzerland.

In Gerhard's house, the SAP-SB found more than ninety items of interest to their investigation, most of which were used as pieces of evidence in the later court case. One of the SAP-SB members even thanked Gerhardt for leaving so much easy-to-find evidence in his house, thereby earning Gerhardt's undying disdain and hatred. Most of the tools of Gerhardt's spying trade found in his home had to do with the way in which he communicated with his Russian handlers.



On 26 January 1983, then SA Prime Minister PW Botha announced during a press conference that a SA naval officer and a Swiss citizen, Dieter Felix Gerhardt and his wife Ruth Johr, had been arrested on charges relating to espionage.<sup>431</sup> Botha said that Gerhardt, a senior officer of the SAN in Simon's Town, had been detained for questioning under Article 29 of the Internal Security Act (No. 74 of 1982), relating to espionage.<sup>432</sup> Botha gave no further information at the press conference, except to say that Gerhardt and his wife Ruth had visited the Soviet Union multiple times and that classified information had in all probability reached the Soviet Union in this manner.<sup>433</sup>

In the house, which was subjected to non-stop searches and examinations, ninety items of espionage use and interest were found by the SAP-SB, including concealment devices for clandestine communications, one-time letter pads,<sup>434</sup> codes, and meeting schedules. The ease with which Gerhardt's spying apparatus and tools of the trade were found, left investigators astonished at his lack of care and due diligence and for making it easy for the state to present evidence against Gerhardt and Ruth Johr in court. One film found in the house had been adapted by the Russians to store 360 photos. Hidden in a drawer at the bottom of a desk in the lounge, the SAP-SB found a Praktina camera for copying documents and a Minox B camera, both favourites with Russian spies throughout the world. Exposed 35 mm cassettes, containing 270 classified documents and photos, were found in Gerhardt's garage.

Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt were questioned for six months by SA authorities, as well as counter-intelligence experts from the British, German, French, and Israeli intelligence services.<sup>435</sup> In 1983, Israel had a secret cooperative agreement with 39 countries, including South Africa, to prevent information leaks from joint military and security projects. Under the agreement between the SADF and the Security Department of the Israeli Ministry of Defence (MALMAB), in the event of an information leak or transfer of sensitive information to a third party by a spy, both parties work together to investigate the matter. The country in which the leak occurred must compile a report containing explanations and the findings of the investigation, and present it to the second country. The country in which the leak occurred, must also allow officials from the second country to investigate. During questioning by the Israelis, Gerhardt admitted that he had passed on information about nuclear cooperation between Israel and South Africa, as well as details of other joint weapons projects. In line with the agreement, Gerhardt was also questioned by MALMAB officers to determine what 'Israeli information' or details on Israel he had sold on to the Soviets.<sup>436</sup>

## **The High Treason Court Case**

On 5 September 1982, Ruth and Dieter Gerhardt were charged with high treason by the SA authorities, in terms of section 29 of the Internal Security Act (No. 44 of 1950) and the Official Secrets Act 16 of 1956.<sup>437</sup>

The Gerhardt couple briefly appeared in the Pretoria Magistrate's court in June 1983, on charges of espionage, and subsequently in the Cape High Court, on charges of high treason. The high treason case, which carried the death penalty if found guilty, commenced in Cape



Town on 6 September 1983.<sup>438</sup> The case for the prosecution was presented by Advocate Niël Russouw, Attorney General of the Western Cape. Throughout the court proceedings, which lasted four months (43 court days), and involved 124 witnesses in camera, Dieter Gerhardt (“Felix”) took all the blame and tried to minimise the role of Ruth Johr (“Lina”) who, according to Gerhardt, was only the executor of his will.<sup>439</sup>

During the court case, it became clear that most of those present did not understand the language, nomenclature, semiology and word definitions of espionage and intelligence science. An out-of-court training session had to be arranged for them, conducted by the SAP-SB. During this training session, Gerhardt and Johr’s complex clandestine communication system and methods were explained to the jurists, with illustrations, examples, and a live demonstration by members of the SAP-SB.

In an effort to try and minimise the role played by Ruth Johr in the spying process, the defence decided to appoint two sets of Pro Deo advocates. Both defendants pleaded not guilty, but Gerhardt’s advocate informed the court that Gerhardt readily admitted to participation in activities that could be construed as espionage activities. Gerhardt acknowledged that he had supplied information to a Russian intermediary, known as a principal, for use as disinformation. Furthermore, that the name of this intermediary, to whom Gerhardt referred as “Donald”, was secret and he (Gerhardt) may not reveal his identity. Gerhardt also referred to a friendly “third country” which he could not name. The prosecutor, Advocate Russouw called Brigadier Herman Stadler as an expert witness who, inter alia, described Gerhardt’s defence as obfuscation, half-truths, distortions and deception. The court’s judgement stated: ‘We accept Brigadier Stadler’s evidence; we accept it as being that of an expert in the espionage and counterespionage.’<sup>440</sup> The judgement also found that Gerhardt and Johr had tried to merge and integrate truth with lies, but that they had failed in this attempt.

In the court case, the lack of liaison and communication between the DMI and South Africa’s other intelligence services, particularly the Directorate Counterespionage of the NIS, became glaringly obvious, eliciting scathing criticism from Judge JP Munnik. After the case, the chief witness for the prosecution wrote that some kind of ideological motivation was the only defence Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt could offer as their defence, hoping that the judge would somewhat be swayed by it. The witness also remarked upon Gerhardt’s ‘imperious and arrogant attitude’.<sup>441</sup> He came across as a know-it-all who wanted to get away with everything.

The high treason court case of Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr concluded in the Cape Town High Court on 29 December 1983. The judge rendered his verdict two days later, on 31 December 1983, and found both defendants guilty of high treason.<sup>442</sup> Forty-eight-year-old Dieter Felix Gerhardt was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to life in prison, while Ruth Johr (41 years old at the time), received a sentence of ten years’ imprisonment. With this, Dieter Gerhardt gained the shameful distinction of being the first-ever SA military officer found guilty of espionage for the Soviet Union.<sup>443</sup>

Gerhardt commented on the verdict as follows:



I was positive I would get the death penalty. At the time, executions were routine in South Africa, sometimes ten a week. The judge wrote that if it had been proved that I had caused the death of even one South African soldier, he would have sentenced me to death.<sup>444</sup>

According to Judge Munnik in his verdict, Dieter Gerhardt was ‘an arrogant and ruthless spy, an egoist, and certainly no ideological idealist’. Gerhardt’s explanation to the court in his affidavit, ‘that he was actually an operative for an undisclosed principal, a country not hostile to South Africa’, was rejected by the judge.<sup>445</sup> The considerable amounts of money paid by the GRU to Gerhardt, dutifully smuggled back to South Africa by Ruth Johr in the false bottoms of suitcases and carry-on luggage, proved greed and treason for self-enrichment as the only motive for spying for the Soviet Union. Judge President George Munnik said in his judgement of the Gerhardt couple that, if even one member of Gerhardt’s employer, the SADF, had been killed because of his spying actions, the death penalty would have been pronounced.<sup>446</sup>

## **Amnesty**

On 15 May 1989, Dieter Gerhardt applied for “political amnesty” but his request was rejected by the Minister of Justice, Kobie Coetzee. In his written reply, Coetzee said that it was clear from the application before him, as indeed from the verdict of the Supreme Court of South Africa, ‘that financial reward was the applicant’s motive for spying. The court found that the applicant’s effort to tie his motive to an effort to change the political structure of the country, amounted to lip service.’<sup>447</sup>

Ruth Johr was released from prison in 1990, after spending eight years for her role in one of the Soviet Union’s biggest spying operations in South Africa. After years in prison, Dieter Gerhardt was released in August 1992 as part of a deal reached between presidents FW de Klerk of South Africa and Boris Yeltsin of Russia. The agreement reached between the two countries was the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, on condition that Gerhardt receives amnesty. Gerhardt was not sent to Moscow or exchanged for other Western spies. He was merely put on a plane to Switzerland. The Swiss intelligence service was informed of his pending arrival, after the plane was well on the way to Switzerland and before it landed. In Zürich and then Basel, Gerhardt was reunited with his wife and fellow spy, Ruth Johr and their son, Gregori, named after Gregori Shirobokov.<sup>448</sup> Gerhardt received a thank you letter from Nelson Mandela and was offered a post as military advisor to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), an offer Gerhardt declined. His guilty verdict for espionage was later pardoned by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but not his prison sentence.<sup>449</sup> Gerhardt was awarded the rank of Rear Admiral by the new SA government.

After his release from Swiss prison, Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt’s second GRU handler, Vitaly Shlikov, returned to Russia where he was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence by the Yeltsin regime in 1990. Shlikov also became a founder member of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defence Policy and died in 2011.<sup>450</sup> From a counterespionage and investigation perspective, Vitaly Shlikov was never questioned or charged with any offence by the SA authorities.





## Profiling Gerhardt from a Counterespionage Perspective

Gerhardt's questioners noted that Gerhardt paid careful attention to the questions he was asked to gain some clue to how he was caught. That is very important information for a caught spy to know, because then he can guess how much his interrogators really know, what he can safely admit, as they already probably have the answer, and about what to keep quiet because they will probably not know about something, nor ever will. One of the primary purposes of the investigators was to keep Gerhardt guessing how he was originally identified and caught. Gerhardt had no idea how long he was under investigation. Neither he nor his handler had any idea how long they were under surveillance, before he was eventually arrested in the United States.

The SAP-SB investigators held secret meetings with KENTRON, ARMSCOR and the Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC), the three organisations to which Gerhardt had access, in an effort to establish the true scope and width of Gerhardt's espionage. The development of South Africa's nuclear capabilities was (and remains) a priority intelligence target for the Russian, American and British intelligence services since the AEC had started with uranium-enrichment experiments and programmes in the 1960s. South Africa produced its first highly enriched uranium in 1978, at a time when Dieter Gerhardt was in his prime as a Russian spy, and he wangled a visit to the top secret underground nuclear test site at Vastrap.<sup>451</sup> The Vastrap test site was located 100 kilometres north of Upington, and was developed to conduct underground nuclear explosions. As a direct result of Gerhardt passing this information to GRU, the Soviets moved a spy satellite over the site in 1977. The Americans did the same and their spying activities regarding South African nuclear capabilities led directly to the expulsion for espionage of their ambassador in Pretoria.<sup>452</sup> Following disclosures about South Africa's nuclear development programme, the red-faced Americans demanded that South Africa immediately cease all nuclear tests, and sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This request was met with the derision it deserved, coming at the lowest point in history in the bilateral relations between South Africa and the United States.

US Ambassador William Brockway Edmondson and the Beechcraft Twin Engine C-12 used to spy on South Africa's AEC and nuclear device testing site at Vastrap. A CIA espionage camera, attached to Edmondson's private aircraft, was discovered by SA authorities, and Edmondson was expelled from South Africa on 12 April 1979.

Two support agents<sup>453</sup> helped Ruth Johr during her courier trips to Switzerland and the Soviet Union. One of the persons providing her with cover had no idea that Johr was a Russian spy, with the jury remaining out on the second cover provider. In 1988, whilst serving her ten-year prison term for treason, Ruth Johr attempted to gain her freedom by renouncing violence in order to take advantage of an offer made by South African President PW Botha to political prisoners. However, Johr's request was turned down by Justice Richard Goldstone.<sup>454</sup> Johr's application was based on an alleged offer made by the State President in Parliament to political prisoners. The president had said 'Government is willing to consider releasing prisoners on condition that they renounced violence as a political instrument.'<sup>455</sup> Johr alleged that this offer was subsequently made to her in prison,



and she had accepted it in a letter posted to the state president and in a form signed by her accepting the offer on the conditions stated by the president. In her affidavit, Johr acknowledged that her renunciation of violence would not entitle her to immediate release, but would be taken into consideration as a factor by the Release Board.<sup>456</sup>

## **Tradecraft and Clandestine Communication Methodology**

In the trade of spying, the methods used by an intelligence service to communicate with its spies and support agents are of critical importance, because the mere existence of such a clandestine communication system is a red flag. The physical components of a clandestine communication system, for example dead letter boxes, cut-outs, signs and signals, caches, cameras, microfilm, are confirmations of spying activity, and therefore the focus of any counterintelligence investigation. Apart from the cameras mentioned earlier, Dieter Gerhardt's favourite spying tools, found in his house, were three Olympus Pen-F 35 mm cameras, three miniature cameras, and a Fugica video camera. Gerhardt used different concealment methods, amongst them a cigarette holder, a key ring holder and a hip flask, which he kept in his office. The GRU adapted Gerhardt's 35 mm films by joining them together, sometimes as many as eight at a time, to lengthen their use and usefulness. This enabled Gerhardt to assemble and store a vast number of photos of documents on one film. Counterintelligence investigators found more than two hundred typed A5-size reports and documents on one such adapted 35 mm film roll. During the investigation, Gerhardt confessed to handing over 270 x 35 mm films to the Russians.

Unaware that her daughter had been arrested in South Africa on charges of espionage, Ruth Johr's mother opened the door to her Basel apartment to Swiss counter-intelligence investigators on a fateful day in 1983. The SAP-SB had informed the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service, the SFIS, of the arrest on charges of espionage of Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr. In the apartment, the investigators found seven 15 mm films, inadvertently left behind by Ruth Johr after a failed meeting with her GRU handler in Zürich. The film contained 3 978 copies of stolen SAN and NATO documents.<sup>457</sup>

As a result of Gerhardt's disclosures, his handler, Vitaly Shlikov, was arrested in Zürich. Several items of note were found in Shlikov's possession and later used as evidence during Gerhardt and Johr's court case in Cape Town. At the invitation of the SFIS, two senior investigators, Brigadier Herman Stadler and Lieutenant General Lothar Neethling visited Switzerland to examine items and evidence found in Shlikov's possession, as well as aspects and elements of the clandestine communications network used by Gerhardt and Johr. Neethling was an expert in secret writing methods of the kind used by Gerhardt and Johr.<sup>458</sup> Because of Switzerland's neutrality status (a fact that the Swiss repeated to the South Africans ad nauseam), the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service initially refused to hand over pieces of evidence to Stadler and Neethling, but later relented.

A second visit to Switzerland by Brigadier Stadler and the Attorney General of the Cape Province Advocate Neil Russouw, authorised by the SA Minister of Justice, followed. During this visit, a meeting took place in Bern with a senior staff member of the Swiss Attorney General's office, Dr Gerber. Gerber was initially reluctant to help, but promised



to obtain authorisation from the Swiss Minister of Justice to hand over all the evidence the SFIS had gathered in Switzerland, to the South Africans. A week later, a letter from Gerber arrived, giving permission for the Swiss evidence against Gerhardt and Johr to be used in the court case in Cape Town.

Against the wishes of the Swiss authorities, Gerhardt was taken to Switzerland. Gerhardt complained that it was against his will, much to the frustration and disgust of the Federal Intelligence Service (FIS), who correctly surmised that Gerhardt wanted to create an international diplomatic incident. During this forced visit, Gerhardt identified dead drops and meeting places with his Russian handlers, information later used in the court case against him.

### **The Psychological Make-Up of a Spy**

Gerhardt, by his own admission, developed a strong dislike for his SA questioners who tried to convince him that they knew about his activities for a long time, and that he had been under continual investigation and surveillance by SAP-SP, Directorate: Military Intelligence and the NIS. Gerhardt knew that the SA intelligence services had known almost nothing until the CIA informed them of his arrest and his activities.<sup>459</sup> Gerhardt later said that he and his wife confessed rather quickly and easily to their spying activities, because they were relieved and wanted to bring an end to this chapter in their lives. This phenomenon is not unusual for spies who have operated for very long periods of time – it does come as a temporary sort of relief on the one hand and is sometimes known to lead to them revealing information they would normally refrain from doing, but this is merely short-term relief.

### **Damage Assessment**

Dr Evert Kleynhans, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Military History at the University of Stellenbosch and editor of *Scientia Militaria*, the SA Journal of Military Studies, describes the military security impact of Dieter Felix Gerhard and Ruth Johr's spying careers as follows:

Between 1963 and 1983, when Gerhardt and Johr spied for the GRU, the SADF had nearly reached its zenith in terms of force structure, design, and equipment. Having become increasingly involved in the low-intensity conflicts in Southern Africa over the period, the SADF had to contend with both conventional and unconventional threats to South Africa's sovereignty. Moreover, in support of the counterinsurgency war in northern Namibia, the SADF also conducted a number of large-scale cross-border operations into Angola where it faced a far more resolute and conventional threat from Angola and its communist allies. As such, the SADF needed to possess joint capabilities and equipment to dominate the land, air, and naval domains in Southern Africa. Despite increased sanctions and an arms boycott during this period, the SADF had relatively advanced weaponry at its disposal. This was partly brought about by earlier arms acquisitions



from abroad and a concerted effort during the 1970s to reequip the SADF through the development and expansion of the domestic arms industry under the direction of ARMSCOR. Through these efforts, the SADF was equipped with among other fast missile-carrying strike craft, submarines, fleet replenishment vessels, fighter and transport aircraft, helicopters for trooping and close air support, tanks, armoured cars, infantry fighting vehicles, and field and self-propelled artillery.<sup>460</sup>

The most serious damage that Dieter Gerhardt's spying activities had caused was the loss of South Africa's secret ORBAT (Order of Battle) information. Gerhardt had sold South African information and intelligence regarding the identity, strength, command structure and disposition of personnel, units and equipment of its military forces, to the Russians.

### **Gerhardt's Access to Intelligence Targets and Information**

Because the combat preparedness of the SAN was closely linked and integrated with the combat capabilities and preparedness of the SADF, Gerhardt had direct access to gold dust information for the Soviet Union – South Africa's combat plan for war. On 1 May 1946, the South African Naval Forces (SANF) was constituted as part of the Union Defence Force (UDF) and changed its name to the SAN in July 1951. When Gerhardt became a Soviet spy in 1963, the combat force of the SAN consisted of two Algerine-class minesweepers, a Flower-class corvette, two W-class destroyers, a Type 15 anti-submarine frigate, and three Type 12 President-class frigates. In 1968, South Africa received three Daphné-class submarines from France, of which every construction detail and combat capability was sold by Gerhardt to the GRU. Following visits by Prime Minister Vorster and Defence Minister Botha to Israel, South Africa bought and deployed nine Reshef missile strike craft for conventional naval engagement in SA waters.<sup>461</sup> Gerhardt had access to and had visited the underground electronic labyrinth Silvermine, the most protected and most secret military facility in South Africa. Silvermine is an electronic database equipped with the most modern equipment for monitoring aircraft and ships in the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean – South Africa's eyes and ears.

At the time of his arrest, Gerhardt was Officer Commanding of the Simon's Town naval base. In his previous post at SADF headquarters in Pretoria, Gerhardt's job description was Senior Staff Officer Research in the Office of Force Development. As one of the directors of the Office of Force Development, a post he held for several years, Gerhardt had direct access to South Africa's most sensitive and secretive military information and the documents South Africa exchanged with NATO countries. The recruitment of Gerhardt as a GRU spy illustrates the importance the Russians attached to obtaining details of British, NATO and SA submarine and anti-submarine capabilities. International weapons sanctions against the SA government meant that the SADF bought weapons in secrecy on international arms markets, and Gerhardt was sent on such buying missions on a regular basis. He therefore had direct access to top secret information of the SADF pertaining to weapons procurement. Gerhardt used his position as Senior Staff Officer Research in the Office of Force Development to great effect to access information to which he did not otherwise and normally would have had access. He did not need a network of sub- and



contract agents to assist him in his information-gathering activities – the Navy, Army, Air Force and DMI were all ‘his personal network’.<sup>462</sup> Gerhardt even received praise from the Navy and his friend, admiral HH (Hugo) Bierman, for his work. The management of the SAN and DMI were never able to connect the dots between Gerhardt’s personal opulent lifestyle and his spying activities – they suspected nothing.

During his tenure at SADF headquarters in Pretoria, Gerhardt informed his colleagues that he had identified a weakness in the SADF’s weapons procurement programme. Gerhardt suggested that all the information in possession of the SADF regarding weapons and weapons systems, be centralised in one place, in one data bank, a central library on the combat capabilities of the defence force. The generals agreed and a central data bank was established, placing a trove of secret and sensitive military information at Gerhardt’s fingertips.

In 1977, Dieter Gerhardt visited South Africa’s top-secret Vastrap underground nuclear device testing site near Upington in the Northern Cape. Gerhardt subsequently supplied the Russians with top secret information regarding the South African nuclear development programme and nuclear explosive capability. Gerhardt was fully informed about an imminent nuclear device test at Vastrap and gave this information to Colonel Vitaly Shlikov of the GRU. In July 1979, the SA government proceeded with the development and construction of seven deliverable nuclear weapons, shifting responsibility for the programme from the AEC to ARMSCOR. Details about this independent nuclear capability were the single most damaging item of information that Dieter Gerhardt had sold to the Soviet Union.<sup>463</sup> In August 1977, South Africa was ready to test its first nuclear device at the underground Vastrap testing site, an event eagerly awaited by the SA government, and its military-industrial complex, like this ‘cold’ test, was to have been a fully instrumentalised experiment, but without an enriched uranium warhead.<sup>464</sup> On 14 August 1977, just hours before the imminent and top-secret test, an American Beechcraft Twin-engine C-12 light aircraft was noticed, flying over the remote Vastrap site. This aircraft belonged to William Brockway (Bill) Edmondson, the US ambassador to South Africa, and was fitted with a 70 mm electronic long-reach spy camera.<sup>465</sup> The AEC and SADF headquarters in Pretoria were immediately notified and the incident investigated, finding that no flight plan for an aircraft in the Upington–Vastrap area had been submitted or approved by aviation authorities. On 17 August 1977, the American ambassador to South Africa, William Brockway Edmondson, contacted the SA Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria, demanding to know what was going on at Vastrap and insisting on a visit to the site. According to Dr Nic von Wielligh, member of the Atomic Energy Board of South Africa, an ‘inspection would undoubtedly serve to confirm that preparations had been made for a nuclear test, even if it was only a cold test’.<sup>466</sup> South Africa’s civilian intelligence service already knew that both the United States and the Soviet Union had deployed Rhyolite, Vela-6911, and Cosmos spy satellites over its territory.<sup>467</sup> Foreknowledge, supplied by Dieter Gerhardt, was the only reason the satellites were positioned by these two superpowers above a remote and desolate area of South Africa’s western desert area.<sup>468</sup>



As combat officer in the SADF, Gerhardt had access to the specifications of a SA-developed helmet-mounted sight system, used by its Mirage fighter pilots. This sight system was integrated with the ARMSCOR V3A Kukri short-range infra-red dogfight heat-seeking air-air missile system, enabling the pilot to make off-bore attacks, without having to manoeuvre to the optimum firing position. SA pilots used this system in 1975 during the Angolan War, after which Gerhardt handed the design plans to the Russians.

At the time of his arrest in a New York hotel room on 8 January 1983, this commodore had been a spy for the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU, for twenty years.<sup>469</sup> During this period Gerhardt had passed 400 000 pages of classified South African, Israeli, British and NATO documents to the Russians.<sup>470</sup>

The information Gerhardt passed on to the USSR concerned NATO weaponry and battle formations, British naval weapons including missiles, the French Exocet missile system and the entire military structure of the Simon's Town naval base, where he served as commanding officer.<sup>471</sup>

Dieter Felix Gerhardt sold every document on the South African nuclear weapons development programme, and every document of importance, which passed between the SAN, the SADF headquarters in Pretoria, and NATO, to the Russians. But what was the tangible and measurable impact of Dieter Felix Gerhardt spying activities and how did it affect their primary intelligence target, the SADF?

## **Consequences, Lessons and Legacy of the Dieter Felix Gerhardt Spy Case**

### *Counterespionage Lessons*

According to General Magnus Malan, former head of the SADF, he 'became conscious of a security leak in ARMSCOR in 1973' and requested the DMI to determine whether Gerhardt could possibly be a spy.<sup>472</sup> The investigation died a silent death after the DMI found nothing untoward or any indications that Gerhardt could be a spy.<sup>473</sup> Despite the DMI's superficial investigation, Gerhardt managed to get the keys and combinations of the safes used by his fellow officers, and even gained access to their offices, using copies of skeleton keys in order to gather the information he wanted. Gerhardt later told counter-intelligence investigators that he was aware of an earlier investigation into his activities, in 1967, that was ultimately unsuccessful. Malan says that his confidence in the SADF liaison officers, of which Gerhardt was one, had been damaged, and that he had instructed the head of the SAN to transfer Gerhardt away from any contact with ARMSCOR. Gerhardt was transferred from Pretoria to Simon's Town as the new Officer Commanding of the Naval Dockyard – a move that initially did not suit Moscow's requirements at all. As the Commanding Officer of the naval base, Gerhardt not only became the boss of 2 700 naval personnel, but the person responsible for the combat preparedness of the SAN. During the Cold War, the Simon's Town naval base was the most important maritime installation in the South Atlantic and South Indian Ocean, of critical strategic importance to the Western alliance of states.



According to a written assessment given to this writer by the former head of South African CE/CI, the former minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, did not tell the full truth in his autobiography about the Gerhardt spy case. PW Botha told senior military officials after Gerhardt's apprehension that he 'never wanted to hear about a spy in the SA Defence Force again'.<sup>474</sup> This remark by Botha had a paralysing effect on the Directorate: Military Intelligence, in that they became hesitant to investigate other spy cases.

### *Vetting Lessons*

In an intelligence context, vetting is tradecraft jargon for a background investigation, conducted for security clearance purposes prior to the granting of a security clearance. Intelligence services such as the Mossad and the British SIS use different names for the same security function, for example clearance, name check, name trace, positive vetting, and security clearance.<sup>475</sup> Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr were both penetration and not infiltration agents, and therefore the treason they committed, and of which they were found guilty, was difficult to detect. Normal vetting and security clearance procedures would not have detected or identified Gerhardt, because he made his decision to become a spy after his enlistment in the SAN.

In the period of Dieter Gerhardt's spying career (1963–1983), the SADF and the SAP were responsible for their own counterintelligence requirements, including security needs (vetting and background checks) and countering espionage in their own ranks. The SADF and SAP conducted their own vetting, applied their own security policy and procedures, and issued their own security clearances where required. There was no gold standard applied to these procedures in the SADF: 'personnel with access to classified material were vetted and security cleared intermittently, infrequently and negligently. No polygraph testing was done.'<sup>476</sup>

Republican Intelligence (RI), the Bureau for State Security, the DoNS and the NIS did not investigate Dieter Felix Gerhardt and/or Ruth Johr during the period 1963–1983.

### *Prevention Lessons*

Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr were both penetration agents, and not infiltration agents, and therefore the treason they committed and of which were found guilty, was more difficult to detect. Normal vetting and security clearance procedures would therefore not have detected the presence of a Russian spy within the SAN and Defence Force.

Following the Gerhardt spy case and court verdict, President PW Botha said that the South African intelligence services had been investigating Gerhardt for a long time, but that they could not find sufficient evidence against him.<sup>477</sup> Apart from former defence minister Magnus Malan's contention in his autobiography, no corroborative evidence could be found that the Directorate: Military Intelligence had conducted an investigation into the affairs of Dieter Gerhardt between 1963 and 1983.<sup>478</sup> The court case exposed serious flaws in the security clearance and vetting procedures of the SADF Directorate: Military Intelligence (DMI), and elicited harsh criticism from Judge George Munnik in his verdict.<sup>479</sup>



According to Magnus Malan, former Minister of Defence, the greatest harm done by Gerhardt to South Africa was passing information to the Russians about the South African nuclear development programme.<sup>480</sup> The South African nuclear weapons production programme remained top secret for many years – until Dieter Gerhardt sold information about the programme to the Russians. The information sold by Gerhardt to the GRU made a decisive contribution to Russia’s development and enhancement of its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability, without arousing any suspicions or investigations by the West and NATO.<sup>481</sup>

## Conclusion

While some analysts regard Gerhardt as the most successful spy in South African history, counterintelligence officials and historians classify him as the country’s biggest traitor.<sup>482</sup> By his activities and public utterances after his court case and imprisonment, it is clear that Dieter Gerhardt does not fully comprehend or recognise the enormity of the espionage he had committed. By way of refusing to provide full and honest disclosure of his spying activities on behalf of the Russian GRU, Gerhardt forced his interrogators and the judge in his high treason trial, to operate from a position of ignorance and half-truths, rather than a position of strength through knowledge and understanding.

In his definition and explanation of the illustrative case study research model, Dane warns hypotheses generation can be one the most common results of case studies.<sup>483</sup> In the spying case of Dieter Felix Gerhardt, however, the case study research method proved useful by helping to identify Gerhardt’s espionage conduct and behaviour that can be learned and deduced from the collected data:

- That Dieter Felix Gerhardt tried to coerce his family into spying (Janet Coggin), employed his wife Ruth Johr as a courier, spied on his friends, lied to his colleagues in the SAN, and betrayed his country. His only trade in the period 1963 to 1983 was treachery.
- That Dieter Gerhardt was a top-class spy is undisputed. He did enormous damage both in South Africa and in the United Kingdom, but also in France and Israel.
- That he was brilliantly handled by two veteran GRU officers is beyond dispute.
- There is no doubt that his wife Ruth Johr was an excellent courier.
- Ruth Johr’s excuse for travelling to Switzerland to meet with her family was only part of the cover story. At the time of their trial, nobody in NI, SB, CIA or SIS had discovered the other part of Johr’s cover story, and two support agents remain unidentified.

One of the few and only advantages and dividends that emerged from the Dieter Gerhardt espionage case study, was the realisation by South African intelligence services that it had fallen woefully behind the world standards for cryptoanalytical research, progress, and detection capabilities.<sup>484</sup> The Directorate: Military Intelligence had failed to find a spy in its midst, and had failed to understand the threat posed to South African maritime and military security by the *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel’noje Upravlenije* (GRU). During the





period that Gerhardt was an active and productive spy, the GRU had altered and improved their cryptocode procedures for their spies and agents worldwide, removing most of single and duplicated one-time keypads (OTPs)<sup>485</sup> from its espionage operations. South Africa was simply not prepared or equipped by way of its counterespionage techniques and methods for spies of the calibre of Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr.

Intelligence and espionage is often misunderstood. Despite dealing with secrets, they are not in the secrets business. The core purpose of intelligence agencies, such as the GRU and the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB), is delivering collated intelligence and insights to Russian decision-makers, and anticipating the future better and faster than any of their adversaries. Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr did that, and were therefore, according to the measurement of this case study, two of the most damaging spies in South African history.

---

## ENDNOTES

---

- <sup>356</sup> Henning van Aswegen is a former lecturer at the National Intelligence Academy in Pretoria, South Africa, and the author of *Spioenmeesters, Die Buro, The Daisy Spy Ring, and The Spymasters of South Africa*.
- <sup>357</sup> Definition by the researcher. See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990).
- <sup>358</sup> National Strategic Information Center, *Intelligence Terminology* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University, 2015), 112.
- <sup>359</sup> A double agent is a witting agent in contact with two opposing intelligence services, with only one service aware of the duplicity.
- <sup>360</sup> FC Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 114.
- <sup>361</sup> PR Viotti & MV Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), 596.
- <sup>362</sup> T Bekker, *Enkele Staatskundige Konsepte* (Pretoria: AMB, 1991), 30.
- <sup>363</sup> FD Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 113.
- <sup>364</sup> SK Soy, *The Case Study as a Research Method* (San Francisco, CA: PB Publishers, 2003), 31.
- <sup>365</sup> A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011, 8.
- <sup>366</sup> General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai*, 30 September 2021. Two-page statement on the Dieter Gerhardt-Ruth Johr spying incident.
- <sup>367</sup> Statement on the Dieter Gerhardt-Ruth Johr spying incident by a former head of the CI/CE Chief Directorate of South Africa's intelligence services to the researcher.
- <sup>368</sup> Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Case No. SS239/83.
- <sup>369</sup> H Stadler, *The Other Side of the Story: A True Perspective* (Pretoria: Foundation for Equality before the Law, 1997), 135.
- <sup>370</sup> T Bekker, *Enkele Staatskundige Konsepte* (Pretoria: AMB, 1994), 30.
- <sup>371</sup> KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International, 1983), 78.
- <sup>372</sup> JA Camilleri & J Falk, *The End of Sovereignty: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmented World* (Vermont: Edgar Elgar Books, 1992), 161.
- <sup>373</sup> JA Camilleri & J Falk, *The End of Sovereignty: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmented World* (Vermont: Edgar Elgar Books, 1992), 161.
- <sup>374</sup> PR Viotti & MV Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), 293, 395.
- <sup>375</sup> MM Lowenthal, *From Secrets to Policy*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: CQ Press, 2022), 8. Lowenthal defines intelligence studies as follows: 'Intelligence is the study of the process by which specific types of information of importance to national security are requested, collected, produced and made available to the decision-makers, and operational agencies.'



- <sup>376</sup> M Ray, 'Russian Revolution', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Russian-Revolution>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]; G Faulconbridge, 'What is Russia's Military Intelligence Agency?', *Reuters*, 5 October 2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-gru-factbox-idUSKCN1MF1VK>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. See HJ van Aswegen, 'Die Taal wat Spioene Praat', *Netwerk24*, 19 November 2018. <<https://www.netwerk24.com/Stemme/Aktueel/die-taal-watspioene-praat-20171117>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>377</sup> AS Bowen, *Russian Military Intelligence: Background and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service Report, 24 November 2020. <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/R46616.pdf>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 2.
- <sup>378</sup> J Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York, NY: Readers Digest Press, 1993), 88.
- <sup>379</sup> WR Corson & TC Crowley, *The New KGB, Engine of Russian Power*, updated ed. (New York, NY: Quill William Morrow, 1992), 13, 70. See G Faulconbridge, 'What is Russia's Military Intelligence Agency?', *Reuters*, 5 October 2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-gru-factbox-idUSKCN1MF1VK>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. See L Trotsky, *On Lenin: Notes towards a Biography* (London: George G. Harrap, 1971) for further reading on the relationship between Lenin and Trotsky.
- <sup>380</sup> Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB). In the Soviet era, the KGB was responsible for clandestine intelligence operations to spread communism and the Kremlin's influence throughout the world. These operations were referred to as 'political influence operations', while GRU focused on the gathering of military information. The SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) and the FSB (Russian Federal Security Service) grew out of the existence of the KGB and are today, together with GRU (also known as the GU), the two most important Russian intelligence and security services.
- <sup>381</sup> The CHEKA was the predecessor of the KGB (see AS Bowen, *Russian Military Intelligence: Background and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service Report, 24 November 2020. <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/R46616.pdf>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 2.
- <sup>382</sup> Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye – Chief Directorate Foreign Military Intelligence of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Like the KGB, but much bigger in terms of personnel and resources with a focus on military intelligence. GRU has been confused with the acronym SMERSH, which was created during the Second World War as a specialist counter-espionage unit of the KGB to identify and search for double agents and 'enemies of the state'. SMERSH gained a reputation for brutality, often summarily, killing 'enemies of the state' without due legal process.
- <sup>383</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 306.
- <sup>384</sup> C Pincher, *Traitors: The Labyrinths of Treason* (London: New English Library, 1996), 211; E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me'. *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-coggin-the-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021], 330.
- <sup>385</sup> Biermann later became head of the SA Navy. See M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 306.
- <sup>386</sup> C Pincher, *Traitors: The Labyrinths of Treason* (London: New English Library, 1996), 211.
- <sup>387</sup> HJ van Aswegen, *The Spymasters of South Africa* (Baldwin, Georgia: Rabbit Trails, 2022), 67.



- <sup>388</sup> E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021], 330.
- <sup>389</sup> E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- <sup>390</sup> A walk-in is a person with access to relevant information who, voluntarily or according to plan, discreetly presents him-/herself to an intelligence service and offers his/her knowledge in exchange for whatever gain he/she is seeking, usually money.
- <sup>391</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 307.
- <sup>392</sup> *Ha'aretz Magazine*, 7 April 2000, 6, 9, 13.
- <sup>393</sup> HJ van Aswegen, *A Background to the South African Communist Party* (Baldwin, Georgia: Rabbit Trails, 2023), 112.
- <sup>394</sup> J Sanders, *Apartheid's Friends: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's Secret Service* (London: John Murray, 2006), 192.
- <sup>395</sup> Personal interview on 20 November 2022 by this researcher with the former head of CI/CE of one of South Africa's intelligence services.
- <sup>396</sup> LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990). The *International Dictionary of Intelligence* defines a walk-in spy as follows: (1) tradecraft jargon for an opposition agent who voluntarily surrenders himself for defection by requesting political asylum or who offers himself voluntarily for recruitment. A walk-in may also be someone who has something to offer or sell to the intelligence service he is approaching; (2) a defector who presents himself or herself for political asylum; (3) at one time, a disaffected individual seeking aid in escaping from a denied area; (4) official intelligence-community (IC) definition: 'A person who on his own initiative makes contact with a representative of a foreign country and who volunteers intelligence information and/or requests political asylum'; (5) 'An individual who voluntarily approaches a representative of a foreign government to offer his services and/or supplies information of value. Conversely, this term may be applied to an individual who approaches a representative of his own government to indicate a desire to purge himself of wrongful conduct.'
- <sup>397</sup> HUMINT signifies information received from human sources, also called 'human-source reporting' or 'human source reports'. HUMINT is the abbreviation used by intelligence services for 'human intelligence', collected from overt, covert or clandestine sources, observers, informants, informers and agents.
- <sup>398</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143–145.
- <sup>399</sup> AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008), 63.
- <sup>400</sup> A controller, handler or spymaster is a person who is a member of a covert collection element of an intelligence or counterintelligence organisation, or service, and who, in the course of collection and information-gathering functions, guides and controls agents, or intelligence cooperators, or collaborators.
- <sup>401</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>402</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].



- <sup>403</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>404</sup> DST – Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire. Created in 1944 out of the old ST (Surveillance du Territoire), the intelligence section of the Sûreté, the old French Special Branch. For more information on the DST, the RG and the DGSE, read D Porch, *The French Secret Services* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995).
- <sup>405</sup> E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- <sup>406</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>407</sup> E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- <sup>408</sup> E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- <sup>409</sup> According to the espionage historian and writer Chapman Pincher, Johr was a spy for the German Democratic Republic. See P Dickens, 'South African Navy Commodore Turned Soviet Spy ... Codename Felix', *The Observation Post*, 26 August 2017. <<https://samilhistory.com/tag/dieter-Gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021]. In his book *Traitors* (p. 100), Pincher states that Johr was an East German agent before she met Dieter Gerhardt.
- <sup>410</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>411</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>412</sup> Also see N Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1982), 317. Chomsky, a renowned Cold War analyst, states on page 422 of his book that 'the attention of the United States is generally focused on Kremlin-inspired aggression in Africa'.
- <sup>413</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143.
- <sup>414</sup> 'Plausible denial (PD) aka plausible deniability; plausibly denied; plausibly deniable. In covert action, if an operation is surfaced, the explanation to counter attribution to the true sponsoring country or agency.' See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990). The only unclassified reference work of tradecraft, jargon, terminology, cryptonyms, abbreviations and usage, with historical and anecdotal descriptions.
- <sup>415</sup> Discussion with author and former member of the NI.
- <sup>416</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143, 145.
- <sup>417</sup> *The New York Times*, 'South African Officer Arrested in Spying Case', 28 January 1983. 5.
- <sup>418</sup> Accused No. 2, Statement to the Court. Case No. SS239/83/1369/MC2/1369SS239.



- <sup>419</sup> A dead drop, or dead letter box (DLB), is a specific place where intelligence material is deposited by one member of a clandestine communication system or network and recovered (unloaded) by another. It includes signs used to indicate that the dead drop has been loaded and/or unloaded.
- <sup>420</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006).
- <sup>421</sup> *Izvestia*, 14–16 January 1992.
- <sup>422</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143.
- <sup>423</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 198.
- <sup>424</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. 48.
- <sup>425</sup> Operational Information, South African Intelligence Services.
- <sup>426</sup> A witting source or agent spies and supplies information knowingly and consciously (definition by the researcher). The CIA definition reads 'a witting agent is a person, thing, or activity from which intelligence information is obtained. (2) In clandestine activities, a person (agent), normally a foreign national, in the employ of an intelligence activity for intelligence purposes. (3) In interrogation activities, any person who furnishes intelligence information, either with or without the knowledge that the information used for intelligence purposes.' Witting is intelligence tradecraft jargon for an agent that is aware that he/she is working for a clandestine intelligence service, and, in most cases is aware of the identity of the clandestine service. An unwitting agent, source, collaborator or informant can claim that he is not aware of the ultimate identity of the recipient of his information, if he has been recruited under false flag. CIA, *Glossary of Intelligence Terms and Definitions* (Washington, DC, 1989), 345.
- <sup>427</sup> R Kessler, *The Secrets of the FBI* (New York, NY: Broadway, 2012), 128–150. See JT Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community: Counterintelligence and Covert Action* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger), 219.
- <sup>428</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>429</sup> Interview, author with former member of the National Intelligence Service, 2 October 2021.
- <sup>430</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>431</sup> D de Villiers & J de Villiers, *PW* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1984), 275.
- <sup>432</sup> A Mathews, *Freedom, State Security and the Rule of Law* (Johannesburg: Juta, 1986), 34, 47.
- <sup>433</sup> *The New York Times*, 'South African Officer Arrested in Spying Case', 28 January 1983, 5. See A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- <sup>434</sup> LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 332. A one-time pad (OTP), also known as a 'cipher pad' in cryptography and tradecraft, is used for enciphering and deciphering clandestine intelligence communications. It can be used only one time, hence the name. OTPs are considered one of the safest possible ways an agent communicates with his handlers because of its single use application.



- <sup>435</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. 57.
- Y Melman, 'Israel Signed Secret Security Pacts with 39 Countries', *Haaretz*, 15 August 2001, 1–2.
- <sup>436</sup> Y Melman, 'Israel Signed Secret Security Pacts with 39 Countries', *Haaretz*, 15 August 2001, 1–2.
- <sup>437</sup> A Mathews, *Freedom, State Security and the Rule of Law* (Cape Town: Juta, 1986), 220.
- <sup>438</sup> Interview by the researcher with a former member of the SA State Security Council Secretariat, 4 October 2021. See R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>439</sup> General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* magazine, 30 September 2021.
- <sup>440</sup> Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Court document. Conviction. Stamped MCHC21012391983, dated 31 December 1983.
- <sup>441</sup> General Herman Stadler, to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* Magazine, 30 September 2021.
- <sup>442</sup> Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Court document. Conviction. Stamped MCHC21012391983, dated 31 December 1983.
- <sup>443</sup> A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- <sup>444</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]
- <sup>445</sup> Dieter Felix Gerhardt. Affidavit to the court. Case SS239/83, 2.
- <sup>446</sup> General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* magazine, 30 September 2021. See P Dickens, 'South African Navy Commodore Turned Soviet Spy ... Codename Felix', *The Observation Post*, 26 August 2017. <<https://samilhistory.com/tag/dieter-gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021],
- <sup>447</sup> A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- <sup>448</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- <sup>449</sup> TRC/Amnesty Committee, *Dieter Felix Gerhardt, AM5978/97*, 1999. <[https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/1999/990330\\_Gerhardt.html](https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/1999/990330_Gerhardt.html)> [Accessed on 24 March 2021].
- <sup>450</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143. Also see AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008),
- <sup>451</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 214–215.
- <sup>452</sup> HJ van Aswegen, *Spioenmeesters* (Pretoria: Kraal, 2021), 234.
- <sup>453</sup> Support agent is tradecraft jargon for an agent who services another agent or net(work), such as a courier or safehouse keeper, or a person who loads and unloads DLBs.
- <sup>454</sup> P Dickens, 'Dieter Gerhardt', *The Observations Post*, 8 September 2020. <<https://samilhistory.com.tag/dieter.Gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 October 2021], 1.
- <sup>455</sup> Gerhardt vs. State President and Others, 1989(2)Sap499(T), Transvaal Provincial Division, Goldstone, J. Judgement, 7 September 1988.
- <sup>456</sup> Gerhardt vs. State President and Others, 1989(2)Sap499(T), Transvaal Provincial Division, Goldstone, J. Judgement, 7 September 1988.



- <sup>457</sup> *Izvestia*, 14–16 January 1992
- <sup>458</sup> ‘Secret writing’ is the tradecraft term for clandestine communications using secret inks, codes and ciphers or microphotography. Secret writing is any method that renders writing invisible to ordinary inspection. See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 446.
- <sup>459</sup> *The New York Times*, ‘South African Officer Guilty of Spying’, 30 December 1983, 3.
- <sup>460</sup> E Kleynhans, Senior lecturer in Military Studies, Stellenbosch University, editor of *Scientia Militaria*. E-mail to author, 24 June 2022.
- <sup>461</sup> Personal interview with a former permanent employee of Denel and Armscor, 12 December 2021.
- <sup>462</sup> Former head of CI/CE in South Africa’s intelligence services.
- <sup>463</sup> AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008), 64.
- <sup>464</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa’s Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 135. The Vastrap testing site, consisting of two test shafts, is owned by the SA Defence Force.
- <sup>465</sup> HJ van Aswegen, *Spioenmeesters* (Pretoria: Kraal, 2021), 118.
- <sup>466</sup> N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa’s Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 137.
- <sup>467</sup> WE Burrows, ‘The Coldest Warriors’, *Air & Space*, January 2000. <<https://www.airspacemag.com/military-aviation/the-coldest-warriors-850417>>. 3. [Accessed on 8 February 2021]. See J Richelson & WM Arkin, ‘Spy Satellites: “Secret”, but much is known’, *Washington Post*, 6 January 1985. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1985/01/06/spy-satellites-secret-but-much-is-known/fa494baa-0c9e4929-ae90-d441d46893af/>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021], 13. Justia US Law, *United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Andrew Daulton Lee, Defendant-appellant, 589 F.2d 980 (9th Cir. 1979), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit*, 15 February 1979. <<https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellatecourts/F2/589/980/194005/>> [Accessed on 5 February 2021].





<sup>468</sup> According to the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), published in 2016 (S Bidgood & W Potter, 'Cold War Lessons for Contemporary U.S.-Russian Non-proliferation Cooperation: The South African Case', *NTI*, 17 October 2016. <<https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cold-war-lessons-contemporary-us-russian-nonproliferationcooperation-south-african-case/>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021]). The USA and Soviet Union uncharacteristically cooperated to end South Africa's development of nuclear weapons: 'An important, but by no means singular, case of non-proliferation cooperation between Washington and Moscow occurred in the 1970s when the two countries were military and ideological adversaries ... Some of the specifics of the South African case remain hazy, but a large body of evidence supports the conclusion that the United States and the Soviet Union collaborated in a sustained, multi-faceted, and successful fashion to prevent South Africa from undertaking a nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert in 1977. The achievement, ultimately, did not preclude South Africa's acquisition of nuclear weapons, but it did demonstrate the readiness of two Cold War adversaries to work together in pursuit of a common non-proliferation goal.' R Möser, *How the Carter Administration Pursued Non-proliferation Policies: A View from Apartheid South Africa*. Wilson Center, 7 June 2019. <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/how-the-carter-administration-pursued-non-proliferation-policies-view-apartheid-south>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021. Researcher's note: The reason why the USA and the Soviet Union collaborated on South Africa was the closure of the Russian Embassy in Hatfield, Pretoria in 1956. The Soviet Union and South Africa therefore had no diplomatic or consular relations, the US was used by the Russians as a handy intermediary. The Russians regarded South Africa as an enemy (for example, the 1975 Angolan War), while the US and Carter Administration regarded South Africa as a naughty child who had to be preached to and admonished. In 1975, the South African intelligence services had not yet developed the counter-intelligence techniques to deflect American and Russian attempts to subvert the government in the name of ideological principles. Russia's efforts to subvert South Africa was in the name of the advancement of communism. America's aim was to advance their own self-interest. South Africa was therefore not impermeable to outside political influences. In the second half of the 20th century, both countries observed the principle of non-intervention in South Africa's internal affairs, with considerable irregularity.

<sup>469</sup> Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije (GRU), Russian military intelligence service.

<sup>470</sup> R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]

<sup>471</sup> HR Pike, *A History of Communism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Christian Science Monitor of South Africa, 1985), 78.

<sup>472</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 315-316.

<sup>473</sup> A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011, 8-9.

<sup>474</sup> Former head of CI, National Intelligence Service, to the researcher.

<sup>475</sup> LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 534.

<sup>476</sup> Operational interview and statement by a former head of CI/CE in South Africa's intelligence services to the researcher. 3 March 2023.

<sup>477</sup> See D. Prinsloo, *Stem uit die Wilderness* (Cape Town: Vaandel Uitgewers, 1997); M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 305.

<sup>478</sup> Court case, Court record SS239/83.



- <sup>479</sup> Court case verdict, Case No. SS239/83. Superior Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division, 29 December 1983.
- <sup>480</sup> M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 305.
- <sup>481</sup> P Wright, *Spycatcher* (Adelaide: Heinemann, 1987), 210.
- <sup>482</sup> Hennie Heymans, a former brigadier in the South African Police Security Branch and an acknowledged historian, describes Dieter Gerhardt as the most damaging spy in the history of South Africa.
- <sup>483</sup> FC Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 114.
- <sup>484</sup> Cryptography is the means and methods rendering plain text unintelligible and converting encrypted text into legibility. Crypto-analysis, or code breaking, is the covert and clandestine process whereby the coded communications of a spy or other intelligence service is made available in plain text (definition by the researcher). Cryptography transforms an encoded or encrypted communication into its equivalent plaintext by means of a crypto system; this term includes the meanings of decipher and decode.
- <sup>485</sup> One-time keypads (OTKs) are the safest way of encipherment communication used by intelligence services because only the sender and receiver have copies of the same pad. As long as every sheet and pad are used only once, the code is unbreakable. The difference between an OTP and OTK is the addition of the 'keys', enabling an agent to both code and decode secret messages.
- 