

The Gouzenko Affair and the Start of the Cold War



Outline

- WWII (Parts 1 and 2)
- Igor Gouzenko - Arrival and Escape from Soviets
- Reaction of Allies
- Royal Commission and Spy Trials
- Consequences
- Gouzenko's Life in Canada
- Historic Plaques Commemoration
- More Information – Books & Videos

WWII – Part 1

1939 - 1941

- Aug. 23, 1939: Nazi-Soviet Pact (and Secret Protocols).
- Sept. 1: Germany invades Western half of Poland.
- UK, France, Canada declare war on Germany.
- Sept. 17: USSR invades Eastern half of Poland.
- No one declares war on USSR (which goes on to take over the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and attack Finland).
- Between 1939-1941 USSR trades with Nazi Germany and is a supplier of resources, while guaranteeing no Eastern front.
- CPC opposes the war effort and is declared illegal.

WWII – Part 2

1941 -1945

- June 22, 1941: Operation Barbarossa.
- USSR now engaged in a common struggle with allies against Nazi Germany.
- Canada and USSR reestablish relations.
- CPC reconstituted itself as the Labour Progressive Party (LPP). Now supports the war effort.
- 1942: Canada and USSR establish diplomatic missions.
- June 1943: Gouzenko arrives in Ottawa.
- Oct. 1943: Svetlana arrives. Soon son Andrei is born.
- Fred Rose elected LPP MP in 1943 and 1945.

Igor Gouzenko

1919 - 1982

- Born in Rogachev. Architecture student at U of Moscow.
- Joined Red Army in 1941.
- GRU cipher clerk at Soviet Embassy in Ottawa.
- What happened to Reiss (1937), Trotsky (1940), Krivitsky (1941), Kravchenko (1966)?
- Sept. 2, 1945: Japanese surrender. WWII ends.
- Sept. 5: Gouzenko walks out of Soviet Embassy.
- First significant international incident of the “Cold War”. Exposure of a GRU spy network in Canada and extending to U.S. and U.K.

Canada

- WLMK's initial reaction: not interested. Did not want Canada to be seen as causing disruption to international relations.
- Norman Robertson (diplomat and PM adviser) convinced WLMK otherwise.
- Gouzenko's information included leads to espionage in the U.S. and the U.K. WLMK paid visits to Washington and London to inform Pres. Truman and PM Attlee.
- No need to declare Soviets PNG – “diplomats” recalled.
- Documents provided some evidence and leads. RCMP investigations were pursued to uncover more evidence which could be used in court.
- “Probably the most important investigation in the history of the Force” – RCMP Deputy Commissioner William Kelly.
- WLMK told the HofC on March 18, 1946 that it was “the most serious situation that has arisen at any time in Canada”.

U.S.A.

- Gouzenko's information includes a reference to "an assistant to an assistant" Secretary of State (Alger Hiss) and leads to others (e.g., scientist Arthur Steinberg, undercover agent Ignacy Witczak, etc).
- Hoover declares the Gouzenko investigation as FBI's top priority.
- November 1945: Elizabeth Bentley provides FBI with lengthy list of communist agents. Her information corroborates what Gouzenko provided and revives interest in Whitaker Chambers' previous revelations.
- FBI investigates hoping to gather evidence for prosecutions. However, it notified the White House and top officials, and conducted massive physical surveillance which likely alerted the suspects who covered their tracks.
- FBI did not catch any suspect in the act of committing espionage.

U.K.

- MI5, MI6 and BSC get involved.
- Gouzenko's information includes references to an atom bomb scientist, a High Commission employee, "ELLI", etc.
- Alan Nunn May returns to London – expected meeting with Soviet handler does not happen.
- Volkov's attempted defection in Istanbul fails.
- Huge Problem in the UK...his name is...

1946

- Feb. 3: First public mention of Gouzenko defection in American journalist Drew Pearson's radio broadcast.
- Feb. 5: Cabinet meeting. Royal Commission established. Several interim reports.
- Feb. 15: Suspects arrested. RCMP and Commission interrogations.
- March 5: Allan Nunn May arrested in London. Churchill gives "Iron Curtain" speech. "UKUSA" secret treaty agreed to.
- June 27: Commission's Final Report.

Spy Trials in Canada

- 20 Charged. 10 Convicted, 10 Acquitted
- Convicted: Fred Rose (6 years), Sam Carr (6 years), Gordon Lunan (5 years), Philip Smith (5 years), Harold Gerson (5 years), Edward Mazerall (4 years), Kathleen Willsher (3 years), Emma Woikin (2.5 years), Raymond Boyer (2 years), John Soboloff (fined \$500 and costs).
- Acquitted at trial: Israel Halperin, Fred Poland, Eric Adams, Matt Nightingale, David Shugar, Agatha Chapman, and W.M. Pappin.
- Acquitted on appeal: Henry Harris, James Benning.
- Charges withdrawn: Freda Linton.

Consequences

- International Relations: transition from World War to Cold War. Germany and Japan are rehabilitated and USSR is the “new” threat ...and forget any discussion of sharing atomic secrets.
- Canada and Western Allies: renewed and modified focus on national security - UKUSA Agreement (1946), NATO (1949).
- Security screening of government employees (Security Panel).
- Renewal of historic debate about balancing national security versus civil and legal rights.
- Soviet covert operations in Canada: put on ice for 15 years (Mitrokhin). However, NKVD atom bomb spy Bruno Pontecorvo not caught and defects to USSR in 1950.
- Decline of the CPC’s popularity.

Igor Gouzenko's Life in Canada

- RCMP Protection. Camp X.
- 1948 Book *This Was My Choice*.
- Movie *The Iron Curtain* (20th Century Fox).
- 1954 Novel *The Fall of a Titan* wins Governor General's Award.
- 1982 Igor Gouzenko passes away.
- 2001 Svetlana Gouzenko passes away.

Commemoration of the Gouzenko Affair

- 1999: Applications to City and Fed. Gov.
- 2000: Letter of Approval from Mayor Watson.
- 2001: City Amalgamation, Cancellation, Re-start. Svetlana Gouzenko passes away Sept 3.
- 2002: City Rejection, Federal Designation, and City Reversal.
- 2003: City plaque unveiled.
- 2004: Federal plaque unveiled at two-day conference at National Library and Archives.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!



More Information

- *Remembering Gouzenko: The Struggle to Honour a Cold War Hero* by Andrew Kavchak (Toronto: Mackenzie Institute, 2004).
- *The Gouzenko Affair*, eds. Black & Rudner (Penumbra Press, 2006).

Videos on YouTube:

- 1) Igor Gouzenko – Historic Plaques
- 2) Igor Gouzenko – A Story of Leadership and Legacy
- 3) Gouzenko Plaques – Reports & Interviews (2002-2004)
- 4) Igor Gouzenko – History and Commemoration