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'Crazy' Spy Finally Freed

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This is the last installment in the exclusive account of the author's experiences at the hands of Communist agents. Miss Hammerstein was released March 26 after serving 27 months in Russian and East German jails.

By **GABRIELE HAMMERSTEIN**
(as told to Peter Hahn)

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NEW YORK — I faced the judge of the East German "People's Court," and heard him pronounce my sentence for "espionage."

"In the name of the people of the German Democratic Republic, I hereby sentence you to six years of penal servitude."

My "heinous crimes" had been that I fooled the Russian secret service into believing I was feeding them secret documents from U. S. intelligence files. But the "documents" had been fabrications.

I wasn't allowed legal counsel. I wasn't allowed to see an American consular official. After five months in Russian jails I was handed to the Germans for sentencing. And their kangaroo court did its work.

1st Lt. "Bubi," and Maj. Turpylin took me to the judges chambers.

"Why don't you make it easy for yourself? We can use English-speaking prisoners. We could let you live in Moscow almost a free woman, while you did broadcasting work for us. Or we could use you for writing radio scripts on our propaganda programs."

I told them their suggestion was ridiculous.

I was transferred to Halberstadt Penitentiary, where about 500 victims of Red police terror are paying their "debt to Communist society."

There were only nine women in the maximum-security cellblock where I was held. All had been sentenced for espionage. I shared a cell with 2 women.

I refused to work. I demanded a visit from U.S. authorities. No luck.

One day I snatched an injection syringe, stuck it into my arm and threatened to "inject air into my veins," and kill myself.

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It worked, I was allowed to write a letter to my lawyer. Then I surrendered the instrument.

The next day, I was called into the warden's office. He lectured me and warned I "had to realize I was a criminal." When I tried to answer he backhanded me across the face. I punched him right back. It took five guards to subdue me. I was dragged back to my cell, my face and body a welter of black bruises.

The next day my East German lawyer arrived. He counseled me to "cooperate more readily." He told me we had heard from my mother, and that she was well.

Because of my "uncooperative attitude," the prison authorities made it tough for me. I decided to press for transfer to a prison hospital.

So I became quietly, happily "ga-ga." I became silent, smiling to myself all the time. I took the garbage can in our cell and banged it against the door, shrieking with laughter for two hours or so. Then I refused to eat, get up, keep up my bodily hygiene.

After some beatings from the guards, I was transferred to Waldheim, near Karl Marx City (formerly Chemnitz), close to the Czechoslovakian border.

Waldheim, a penitentiary with a separate prison hospital, was heaven compared with Halberstadt. We were still confined to cells, but the treatment was that accorded sick patients.

Meanwhile, my lawyer told me the U. S. government was doing everything possible to effect my release. Then, in April 1963, I was told my mother had come to see me. She whispered there was a chance for freedom.

In February, I was notified by my lawyer that I "might be released within a few months."

On March 24, the great day came. I was taken to Hohen-schoenhausen near Berlin once more. Maj. Turpylin and Lt. "Bubi" tried to get me to ask "for political asylum" in East Germany or Russia. I just laughed at them.

I was handed to a U. S. Military Mission representative. An American car whisked me through the wall to West Berlin. My mother had joined us, and we were flown to Frankfurt, where we boarded a U. S. - bound jet.

As our plane winged toward New York, I reflected on the past 27 months. It had been worth the pain, anguish and fear. The fact that I had deterred the Reds even a little, while they were searching for my "paper agents," lent meaning to my ordeal.