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Name of Interviewer: De Wet Potgieter

Name of interviewee/s: General Herman Stadler

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| Interviewer | <p>I am sitting here with general Herman Stadler, retired head of the security branch's intelligence unit; It is Monday, 31st of August 2009. Herman could you tell us about the incident when Dieter Gerhardt was arrested as a Russian spy. You were the most important person; you were heading the investigation after he was caught.</p> <p>Describe to me how the Americans' involvement in this as well as the issue about the defence putting all its data information on one computer at the disposal of Gerhardt to milk all the information.</p>   |
| Herman      | <p>Yes, De Wet, about Gerhardt we can talk quite a lot. I wrote an article, the Gerhardt's saga, outlining all the things in detail. Just briefly, he had a very interesting history. He originally came from Germany. Two of his brothers, they were three brothers, were born in Germany. I think he was born here.</p> <p>His father was interned during the war and he was very close to his mother. He was a young in those days and being German, he wasn't very popular at school. In so far that he had to change schools at one stage. While his father was interned his mother had to care for them and because of those trying years he held a grudge against life.</p> <p>His father was later released and obviously when the national</p> |

party came to power he secured a good job for himself. As a result of the difficult day as a young boy, Gerhardt became a problem child stealing cars ride around in it and then just abandon it again. The police caught him and he received a few lashes as punishment.

Through his father's influence he joined the navy, he was of course a brilliant brain, and passed his matric while serving. He also received a special award as the best naval candidate seaman.

Being so brilliant in his work, Gerhardt went overseas on several occasions for training course in the British navy. In those days the British navy still acted like some kind of mentor for the South African navy.

While attending one of these courses he met his first wife, Jeanette from a rich family. They fell in love and from talks with him it became clear that it was never politics that made him a spy, but the opportunity to provide Jeanette with everything she wanted.

They later got married and she move back to South Africa with him, but were never really happy here. While overseas again he decided he wanted to make extra money.

Funny enough, he first approached the American consulate, but they gave him the cold shoulder.

He then went to the Russian embassy as a, as we describe it, walk-in, in other words a person who offers his services. They kept him waiting for awhile. Now if somebody approach me, I also handled agents in my days, I would obviously be sceptical about it. He could have been a double- or even a triple agent. After a while he copied a pile of documents from the British navy and took it to them and told them, listen, I want to work for you. They then started training him. In particular in photography and photographic related things.

And so it went on and he later returned to South Africa and carried on with his services. He worked for a period of 30 years, from 1963 to 1983, for the Russians.

And I can tell you in all honesty he severely compromised the defence force, in particular the navy. The reason for this was his senior position at defence headquarters. He also created the so-called glasses library (as in reading glasses) where he gathered all the defence force's enormous collection of research material, and made use of this of course.

At that stage the research data were not consolidated and if someone wants to do research he had to go to the different sections for the material. The glasses library pulled this all together. He told me he received praises from his superiors for this library, but at the same time also compromised the information.

And so he carried on with his work through the years and at one

stage he divorced Jeanette, because she didn't want to stay on in South Africa. They had three children and he then had difficulty in coping on his own because he had to go overseas quite regularly. On several occasions he also had to go to Russian to centre where he received training and where he also handed over certain information.

At one stage he told centre he faced difficulties and needed an assistant. During the same visit he went to Switzerland on a skiing holiday and met his second wife, Ruth, there. They fell in love, but at the same time it was convenient for him because she was staying in Switzerland. They got married.

Ruth came from a poor family, wonderful woman, very energetic. I experienced her personality myself during the times we were down in Cape town searching through their house.

She then started to function as his courier when she travelled to Switzerland sometime three times a year, taking with her the photographs and films and documents.

On one of these missions, I wrote a short story about it, she had to wear a red scarf and the documents had to be in a red folder and when meeting the agent at a pre-arranged venue the usual code words would confirm their identities. That typical James Bond stories.

She did the work as courier for years. They had a son and she started to become involved in the naval women's social life and he didn't want to involved her in his spying activities.

At one stage he enrolled at the Saracuse university in America for his MBA. He had the permission of the defence force for it, but he told me that his main objective with this was the easier route from there through Canada to the Soviet Union.

At one stage the British had a source, an agent, in the Soviet embassy. When he started passing information to MI6 and as a result of that intelligence it was picked up that information was fed to the embassy.

They suspected the spy was American and therefore informed the CIA. When he had to travel to America for his studies they waited for him and arrested him.

They interrogated him on those machines and he spilled the means. They then discovered he was a South African. They then and there put him on a plane with a tail on him back to South Africa where we were waiting for him at the airport. The security branch arrested him.

We searched his house and found a lot of evidence; I think there were 90 real proofs of his activities.

Only during interrogation did it emerge how badly he did compromised the country. To give you an idea, he told me that all these projects compromised by him were in fact in the defence force's computer system.

Ernst Nieuwoudt, brigadier Nieuwoudt, worked with me on the

case and was my access to the defence force. I asked him to get me all those files. They brought me the stuff, but I'm telling you, De Wet, it was a huge pile of documents. There I realised how brilliant that man's memory was. He took those things one by one. I told him go through it and show me what you compromised.

And he took it one by one and told me I compromised that, this I only compromised in parts.

In other words, I had to build a case against him. He cooperated very well with me. He would be the first to tell you that we worked well together, his wife as well, we worked together.

But remember I had to prove the case in court. I was then in a position to use all those things to charge him in court.

To give you an idea. When he was arrested in America they found a 35mm tape on him. On that tape was more than 200 pages wherein he compromised the entire navy. He would have travelled from there via Saracuse to Russia to hand that material over to his handler. At that stage Ruth travelled on several occasions to Switzerland under the pretext of visiting her family. Her meeting didn't take place and he instructed her to leave the goods in her mother's flat. He would then take those things left behind in the flat together with the tape and hand it over to his handler.

It didn't happen because we were by then informed about his arrest.

Gerhardt also told us that his handler at that stage was a Russian called Bob. It was arranged that they would meet in the Bundestrasse in Zürich, Switzerland. I forewarned the Swiss intelligence and they managed to arrest Bob.

I was waiting at that stage for the documents they found in Bob's possession. Those things found by the Swiss police also helped by case.

I went over to Switzerland with general Neethling. At that stage we knew exactly how to handle the spy documents. We knew the whole issue. We showed the Swiss police how to handle the material and discovered that was in fact the evidence we needed to strengthen a case even further

They, of course tried in their court cases- they had separate lawyers and it appeared strange to me. There were two teams of advocates. They wanted to keep Ruth out of the things. In his statement he also mentioned that Ruth was innocent.

But when we searched their house at one stage we found a lot of tapes he had made and didn't destroy. I don't know why he didn't destroy it.

On one of those tapes it was very clear, Ruth was in the lounge and he was busy in the kitchen and she asked what about this and what about those things. In other words we could prove she was not an innocent courier. She maybe didn't collect the

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|             | <p>things, but she knew what it was all about. We could prove she was Gerhardt's helper.</p> <p>And she was subsequently found guilty. She received ten years and he a life term. Now well, with the new political dispensation they were released.</p>  |
| Interviewer | <p>I would like to clear up one point with you, the place in America where he studied, how do you spell it.</p>  |
| Herman      | <p>It is Saracuse university. It is very close to the Canadian border.</p>   |
| Interviewer | <p>Oh, so, it was very easy for him to travel through</p>  |
| Herman      | <p>Yes.</p> <p>Look, if you look at today's modern technology, you might say that the way he operated was messy, but technology had developed so fast since those days that in those days their methodology were not as tedious as it would appear today.</p> <p>But he received on a monthly basis radio reports, and they made use of certain codes and he received his message in Morse code. He was, of course, fundi in Morse code. He then transcribed those Morse codes onto a OTP- so-called one time pad. He then treated it with certain chemicals to decipher his orders.</p> |