



# Stalin's Romeo Spy: : The Remarkable Rise and Fall of the KGB's Most Daring Operative

*Emil Draitser*

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## **Stalin's Romeo Spy: : The Remarkable Rise and Fall of the KGB's Most Daring Operative** Emil Draitser

Sailor, painter, doctor, lawyer, polyglot, and writer, Dmitri Bystrolyotov (1901–75) led a life that might seem far-fetched for a spy novel, yet here the truth is stranger than fiction. The result of a thirty-five-year journey that started with a private meeting between the author and Bystrolyotov in 1973 Moscow and continued through the author's subsequent research in international archives, *Stalin's Romeo Spy*, pieces together a life lived in the shadows of the twentieth century's biggest events. One of the "Great Illegals," a team of outstanding Soviet spies operating in Western countries between the world wars, Bystrolyotov was the response to Sidney Reilly, the British prototype for James Bond. A dashing man, his modus operandi was the seduction of women—among them a French embassy employee, a German countess, the wife of a British official, and a Gestapo officer—which enabled Stalin to look into diplomatic pouches of many European countries. Risking his life, Bystrolyotov also stole military secrets from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. A man of extraordinary physical courage, he twice crossed the Sahara Desert and the jungles of Congo. But his success as a spy didn't save him from Stalin's purges, at the height of which he was arrested and tortured until he falsely confessed to selling out to the enemy. Sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in the Gulag, Bystrolyotov risked more severe punishment by documenting the regime's crimes against humanity in unpublished and suppressed memoirs that rival those of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The first full-length biography in any language, at once a real-life spy thriller, a drama of desire, and a prison memoir, *Stalin's Romeo Spy* is the true account of a flawed yet extraordinary man.

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