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Prosecution in Ex-G.I.'s Spy Trial Presents Rags-to-Riches Paris Saga

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Sept. 26 (AP)—There was a time when Joseph Helmich, like other servicemen, was often broke, his friends say. But prosecutors allege money was no longer a worry after Helmich began meeting secretly at Paris cafes with a red-haired Soviet spy.

The FBI says Helmich confessed that the espionage conspiracy spanning 17 years began when the then-Army warrant officer was facing court-martial in Paris because he couldn't cover bad checks.

Helmich's solution, agents alleged, was to walk into the Soviet Embassy and offer his services as a spy. In return, they said, he was paid \$130,000, won a Soviet medal of honor and held the rank of colonel in the Soviet Army.

Helmich, 44, is being tried in U.S. District Court on four espionage counts. This week, he saw former buddies and ex-bosses testify about his problems and the way he later flaunted financial success.

The story that unfolded had the ingredients of a spy thriller: clandestine meetings, coded letters, drives through dark, tree-lined Paris streets.

"Joe was the most competent warrant officer I had," recalled Ernest Enos Jr., a retired Army major who was Helmich's supervisor at 50th Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C., in 1963.

Enos said Helmich handled top-secret ciphering and deciphering material, which included the KL-7 Crypto-

system, spare parts, repair and maintenance manuals and code lists that held the key to scrambled, classified messages.

But Enos and others became suspicious when the man who'd passed bad checks at the Paris post exchange suddenly had money to burn.

In 1964, the interviews with Army counterintelligence began. In 1966, Helmich resigned after 12 years in the Army, saying the CIA was on his back.

Last Feb. 5, Helmich signed a "waiver of rights." The day before, testified special agent James K. Murphy, Helmich confessed to him that he had lied to earlier investigators.

Helmich was arrested this summer. His statement to Murphy was brought into evidence at his trial Friday.

Murphy said Helmich had told him that when he faced court-martial in Paris, he went to work for the Soviet KGB. His contact, the man who instructed him in the craft of Soviet espionage, was a 6-foot, 200-pound spy with bushy red hair named Viktor, Murphy testified.

Helmich allegedly told Murphy he delivered parts, manuals and lists about the KL-7 machine to the Soviets and agreed to warn them of attack.

Murphy said Helmich and Viktor arranged a warning system in 1963, when Helmich was stationed at the Fort Bragg readiness command and likely would know if an attack was planned on the Soviet Union or its allies.