The film starts with a man painting. He receives a call and he goes out. During this time he is spying by the cia because he is probably a sovietic spy. After this there is another scene in which the man is painting seated on a bench in a sort of park. There he takes a coin pasted on the bench and, after coming back home, he opens the coin and he finds a little sheet of paper. Meanwhile the cia arrives at his home and arrests him. The spy will be difended by a lawyer, that initially doesn’t want to defend him, but he will realize how important is be defended so he will accept the case. This lawyer, James Donovan, is able to defend the spy Rudolf Abel, who will not die but he will stay in prison for 30 years. In the meanwhile an american pilot and his airplane are hit by two rockets in the soviet’s territory. This man is arrested by soviets and he is also interrrogated. The american government, with the help of James Donovan, wants to change their pilot with Rudolf Abel and the lawyer goes to Berlin to do this mission. In addition to the pilot Powers, Donovan wants also the student Pryor, an innocent arrested by the German’s police. In this situation Donovan has to negotiate with lawyer, one of the soviet part and one of the East Germany part, to make possible the exchange between Powers and Pryor and Abel. In the end Abel and Powers will exchanged at the bridge of Glienicke and Pryer will be released at checkpoint charlie.