

ARCHIVES | 1987

JAMES ANGLETON, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE FIGURE, DIES

By **STEPHEN ENGELBERG** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 12, 1987

About the Archive

This is a digitized version of an article from The Times's print archive, before the start of online publication in 1996. To preserve these articles as they originally appeared, The Times does not alter, edit or update them.

Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems. Please send reports of such problems to archive_feedback@nytimes.com.

James Angleton, the erudite Central Intelligence Agency officer whose search for Soviet agents inside the Government stirred an uproar in the murky worlds of intelligence for a generation, died here this morning of lung cancer. He was 69 years old, Mr. Angleton, who joined the C.I.A. at its inception in 1947, served for more than 20 years as head of its counterintelligence office. He was forced to resign his post in 1974 by William E. Colby, then Director of Central Intelligence, who had become convinced that Mr. Angleton's efforts were harming the agency.

The tall, donnish intelligence official remains one of the most fascinating figures in the history of the C.I.A. His counterintelligence office was considered one of the most secret in the agency, and the problems it analyzed resembled the multidimensional chess games depicted in the best espionage fiction.

With his departure, the agency cut the counterintelligence staff to 80 from 300, and turned away from some of the techniques he had pioneered. Today, some intelligence officials and members of Congress say this may have been an overreaction. They say that the recent disclosures about highly damaging Soviet espionage operations suggest that Mr. Angleton was more accurate in his suspicions than was once believed. Distrust of Soviet Motives

Counterintelligence is one of the most thankless jobs in spy craft. Its practitioners think the unthinkable, examining each operation, recruit or defector for the possibility that it may be a deception. Counterintelligence agents also try to recruit agents who work for hostile intelligence services, hoping to confuse opponents with cleverly packaged false information.

Friends and associates agree that Mr. Angleton, who wore glasses and had a pronounced stoop, was ideally suited for his life's work. His view of the world was characterized by an abiding suspicion - opponents called it paranoia - about the Soviet Union's motives and maneuvers.

When the Soviet Union and China split in the early 1960's, Mr. Angleton remained convinced that the widely reported antagonism was a ruse concocted by the two Communist powers.

The defection of Yuri Nosenko from the Soviet Union in January 1964 prompted a prolonged investigation by Mr. Angleton and his staff. Mr. Nosenko insisted that he had been the Soviet case officer for Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of President Kennedy.

Mr. Angleton was inclined to doubt Mr. Nosenko's insistence that the Soviet security agency, the K.G.B., had no connection to the attack on the President. Mr. Nosenko was released after being interrogated for more than three years, and the consensus at the C.I.A. was that he had been a legitimate defector. Mr. Nosenko was subsequently hired as a lecturer at courses given by the agency. Powerful Role in Agency

Mr. Angleton may have lost the battle over Mr. Nosenko, but he wielded great power inside the agency for decades. His section had access to more information than virtually any other because it was permitted to examine virtually all C.I.A. operations. The counterintelligence staff under Mr. Angleton could and did effectively end the careers of C.I.A. officers suspected of working for the Soviet Union. He often declined to explain why a particular officer had fallen under suspicion.

In addition, Mr. Angleton handled one of the agency's most sensitive relationships with an allied intelligence service, its ties to the Israelis. Mr. Angleton handled "the Israeli account" as it was termed in C.I.A. argot, for more than a decade. Indeed, Mr. Colby, the agency director who forced his resignation, earlier insisted that Mr. Angleton relinquish his control over Israeli matters.

Even with the passage of decades, it is difficult to compile a reasonably certain account of Mr. Angleton's espionage successes, which remain classified. For instance, by one account he was instrumental in obtaining, the text of Nikita S. Khrushchev's secret denunciation of Stalin in 1956.

He was also said to have been deeply involved in the unmasking of Kim Philby, the British double agent. Others say that for a time, at least, Mr. Angleton was deceived by Mr. Philby a man who had come to be his friend.

James Jesus Angleton was born in 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, in Boise, Idaho. His father worked for the National Cash Register Company in Italy, and James Angleton spent summers in Italy while attending Malvern College in England. In 1937, he entered Yale University, where he roomed with E. Reed Whittmore Jr., the poet. The two founded a literary magazine, reflecting what would be Mr. Angleton's lifelong interest in the letters. His favorite poets, friends say, were T.S. Eliot and E.E. Cummings, and in Washington he was often found at lectures on the writings of James Joyce.

Two years after being graduated from Yale, he was recruited by a professor into the Office of Strategic Services, the World War II intelligence agency and forerunner to the C.I.A.

Senator Malcolm Wallop, a Wyoming Republican who was a strong defender of Mr. Angleton, said in a statement today: "James Angleton lived long enough to serve his country before, during and after World war II. He was the architect of the best counterintelligence the United States ever had. In the mid-1970's, Angleton went out of fashion, but he lived long enough to see time and events vindicate him and show how little his accusers understood of the difficult and inherently thankless business of counterintelligence."

In World War II Mr. Angleton directed agents working against Nazi Germany. In 1944 he traveled to Rome where he worked on operations aimed at the Italian Fascist intelligence service. After the war, he worked closely with Italian counterintelligence to uncover reams of data about Soviet operations.

When he returned to the United States, he began to specialize in studying the K.G.B. Mr. Angleton built huge files on the espionage operations of the Russians, and was authorized in 1954 by Allen W. Dulles, then the director of agency, to set up its first counterintelligence staff.

In 1975 Mr. Angleton was awarded the C.I.A.'s highest award, the Distinguished Intelligence Medal.

Mr. Angleton has been sharply criticized in recent years in the memoirs of some intelligence officials, including Adm. Stansfield Turner, the director of Central Intelligence under President Carter. Admiral Turner wrote that he had got Congress to appropriate money to compensate officers whose careers had been ruined because they had come under the suspicion of Mr. Angleton.

But his staff of counterintelligence operatives were quick to defend him and his methods to reporters and others.

"He was truly a Renaissance man," said N. Scott Miler, the chief of operations under Mr. Angleton. "He had a remarkable amount of knowledge about world events, art, literature. most remarkable people I have ever known."

Mr. Angleton is survived by his wife, Cicely d'Autremont; a son, James Charles Angleton, of Los Angeles, and two daughters, Guru Sangat Kaur, of Great Falls, Va., and Lucy d'Autremont Angleton, of New Mexico. He also leaves a brother, Hugh Angleton of Boise, and two sisters, Carmen Mercedes Angleton of Rome and Delores Guarnieri of Florence, Italy.

Services will be held Friday, at Rock Springs Church in Arlington, Va.

A version of this obituary appears in print on May 12, 1987, on Page D00031 of the National edition with the headline: JAMES ANGLETON, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE FIGURE, DIES.