

The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton: A Deep Dive into the World of Counterintelligence

In the annals of the CIA, few figures loom as large and enigmatic as James Jesus Angleton. As the agency's chief of counterintelligence from 1954 to 1975, Angleton led the relentless hunt for Soviet spies within the CIA and beyond. His uncompromising pursuit of counterintelligence became a defining feature of the Cold War era, shaping the CIA's approach to espionage and leaving a lasting legacy on the intelligence community.



The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton by Jefferson Morley

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Angleton's tenure as CIA counterintelligence chief was marked by both remarkable successes and controversial failures. He played a pivotal role in uncovering Soviet spy rings, including the notorious "Cambridge Five" ring that had infiltrated the British intelligence establishment. However, his

obsessive search for moles within the CIA also led to a climate of suspicion and mistrust, damaging the morale and effectiveness of the agency.

This article delves into the life and legacy of James Jesus Angleton, exploring his pivotal role in shaping the CIA's counterintelligence strategy and the enduring mysteries that surround his tenure.

Early Life and Career

Angleton was born in Boise, Idaho, in 1917. His father was a Greek immigrant who worked as a shepherd, and his mother was a devout Catholic. Angleton attended Yale University, where he studied history and literature. After graduating, he worked as a journalist and editor before joining the CIA in 1943.

During World War II, Angleton served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA. He was assigned to the counterintelligence branch, where he played a key role in the development of the agency's counterespionage program.

Cold War Counterespionage

After the war, Angleton was appointed chief of counterintelligence for the CIA. In this role, he was responsible for protecting the agency from Soviet espionage and identifying and neutralizing Soviet agents within the United States.

Angleton's counterintelligence strategy was based on the belief that the KGB had penetrated the CIA at the highest levels. He was convinced that there were "moles" within the agency who were leaking secrets to the Soviets. This belief led him to initiate a series of investigations that targeted CIA employees and their families.

The "Cambridge Five"

One of Angleton's most significant achievements was his role in uncovering the "Cambridge Five" spy ring. This group of British intelligence officers had been recruited by the KGB during the 1930s and had risen to high positions within the British government. Angleton's investigation of the Cambridge Five led to the arrest and conviction of several of its members, including Kim Philby and Donald Maclean.

The Cambridge Five case had a profound impact on the CIA. It demonstrated the vulnerability of Western intelligence agencies to Soviet espionage and led to a heightened awareness of the threat of counterintelligence.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Angleton played a key role in collecting and analyzing intelligence on the Soviet nuclear buildup in Cuba. His counterintelligence team helped to identify Soviet agents in the United States who were involved in the operation, and his analysis of Soviet intentions contributed to the Kennedy administration's decision to blockade Cuba.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was a major victory for Angleton and the CIA. It demonstrated the agency's ability to gather and analyze intelligence in a crisis situation and helped to strengthen the CIA's position within the U.S. government.

The Vietnam War and Watergate

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Angleton's counterintelligence investigations became increasingly controversial. He began to target CIA

employees who were perceived as being disloyal or sympathetic to the anti-war movement. His investigations also extended to the Nixon White House, where he suspected that there were Soviet agents.

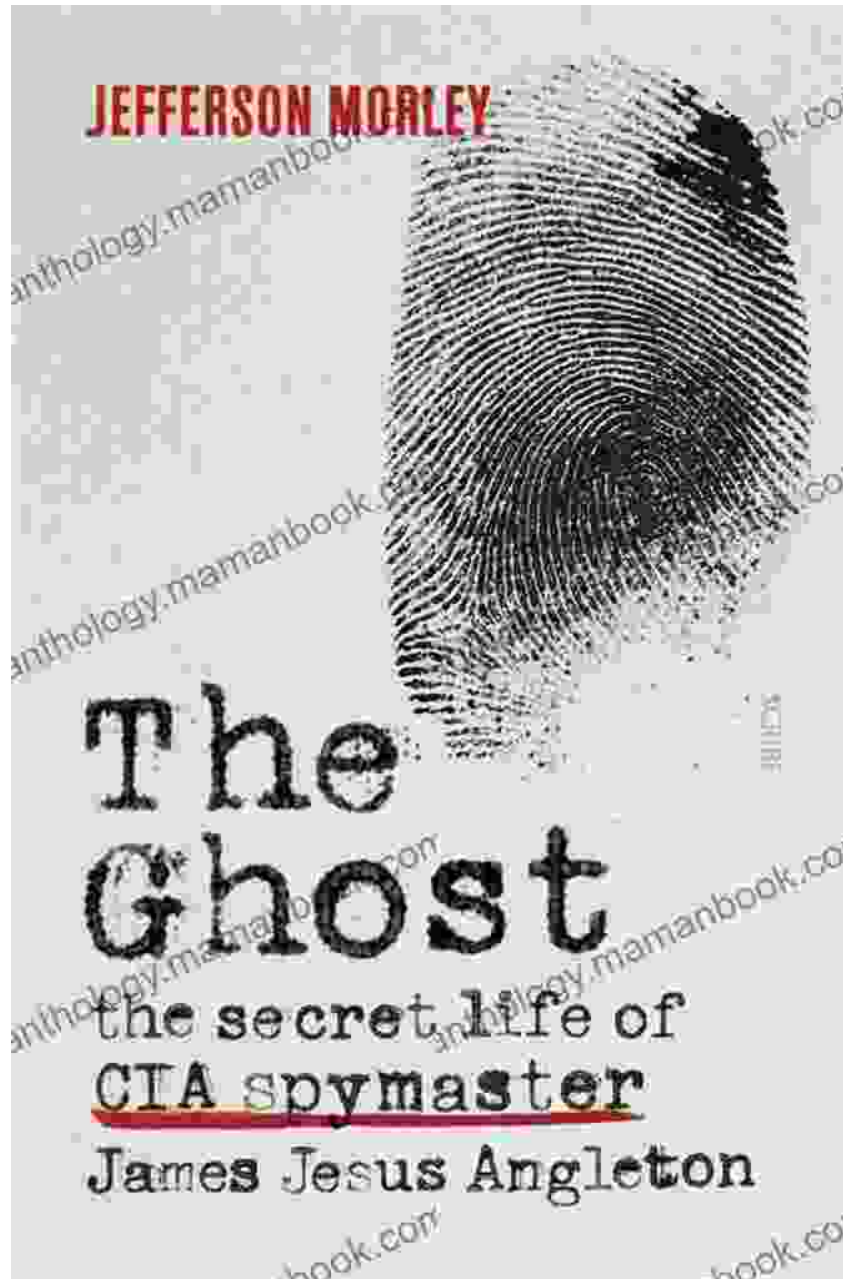
Angleton's investigations eventually led to the Watergate scandal, which led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. Angleton was implicated in the Watergate cover-up, and he was forced to resign from the CIA in 1975.

Legacy

James Jesus Angleton remains a controversial figure in the history of the CIA. He is credited with uncovering Soviet spy rings and contributing to the CIA's success during the Cold War. However, his obsessive search for moles within the CIA also damaged the morale and effectiveness of the agency.

Angleton's legacy is complex and multifaceted. He was a brilliant and dedicated intelligence officer who made significant contributions to the CIA's counterintelligence program. However, his paranoid personality and controversial methods also left a dark stain on the agency's history.

James Jesus Angleton was a complex and enigmatic figure who played a pivotal role in shaping the CIA's counterintelligence strategy during the Cold War. His successes and failures continue to be debated by historians and intelligence experts alike. Angleton's legacy is a reminder of the challenges and complexities of counterintelligence work, and the dangers of paranoia and suspicion in the pursuit of national security.

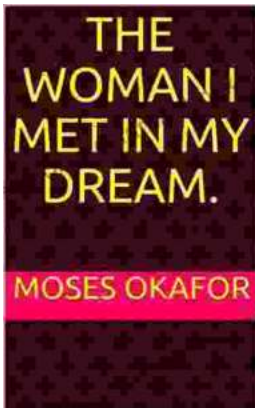


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