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Who Killed the CIA?

The Confessions of Stansfield T

Edward Jay Epstein

ADMIRAL Stansfield Turner commanded a destroyer, a guided-missile cruiser, a carrier task force, a fleet, and the prestigious Naval War College before he was shunted away to a NATO post in Italy in 1975. When he was abruptly summoned back to Washington in February 1977 by his former classmate at Annapolis, President Jimmy Carter, he expected to be appointed to a high naval position or to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Instead, the new President asked him to be Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).

Although Turner had had little previous experience in intelligence, he viewed it simply as a problem of assessing data, or, as he described it to his son, nothing more than "bean counting." Accepting the position of "chief bean counter," he assumed that he could bring the CIA, and American intelligence, to the same standard of operational efficiency he had brought the ships under his command. The four-year effort to achieve this goal is the subject of his book, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition*.[1]

He quickly found, however, that the CIA was a far more complex and elusive entity than he had expected. To begin with, the acting CIA Director, Henry Knoche, rather than behaving like a ship's "executive officer," surprised Turner by refusing his "captain's" first order: a request that Knoche accompany him to meetings with congressional leaders. As far as Turner was concerned, this was insubordination (and Knoche's days were numbered). When he met with other senior executives of the CIA at a series of dinners, he found "a disturbing lack of specificity and clarity" in their answers. On the other hand, he found the written CIA reports presented to him "too long and detailed to be useful." He notes that "my first encounters with the CIA did not convey either the feeling of a warm welcome or a sense of great competence"—an asse
ment of many of these senior officers.

Turner was further frustrated by the system of secrecy that kept vital intelligence hermetically contained in bureaucratic "compartments" within the CIA. Not only did he view such secrecy as irrational, he began to suspect that it cloaked a wide range of unethical activities. He became especially concerned with abuses in the espionage division, which he discovered was heavily overstaffed with case officers—some of whom, on the pretext of seeing agents abroad, were disbursing large sums in "expenses" to themselves, keeping mistresses, and doing business with international arms dealers. Aside from such petty corruption, Turner feared that these compartmentalized espionage operations could enmesh the entire CIA in a devastating scandal. The potential for such a "disgrace," as he puts it, was made manifest to him by a single traumatic case that occurred in the 1960's—one which he harks back to throughout his book, and which he uses to justify eliminating the essential core of the CIA's espionage service.

The villain of this case, as Turner describes it, is James Jesus Angleton, who was chief of the CIA's counterintelligence staff from 1954 to 1974; the victim was Yuri Nosenko, a KGB officer who began collaborating with the CIA in 1962 and then defected to the United States in 1964, and who claimed to have read all the KGB files on Lee Harvey Oswald. The crime was the imprisonment of Nosenko, which, according to Turner, was "a travesty of the rights of the individual under the law." It all began in 1964, after Nosenko arrived in the United States. Turner states that Angleton "decided that Nosenko was a double agent, and set out to force him to confess. . . . When he would not give in to normal interrogation, Angleton's team set out to break the man psychologically. A small prison was built, expressly for him."

Nosenko was kept in this prison for three-and-one-half years, although he never admitted to being a double agent. He was then released and sub-

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[1] Houghton Mifflin, 304 pp., $16.95.

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