

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

KRONTHAL, James Speyer (U)

FROM:

OS/PS/SI&SG/SAD/SIS

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

29 September 1989

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

NO.	TO:	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
		RECEIVED	FORWARDED		
1.	C/SIS		9/29/89		
2.	C/SAD		10/3		
3.	C/SI&SG		10/4/89		Propch interview in Attachment [redacted]
4.	OC/PS		10/5 10/5		New work by [redacted]
5.	C/OS		10/6 10/6		
6.	C/SI&SG		10/12 10/12		[redacted] excellent work
7.	C/SAD		10/14		Answer [redacted]
8.	OC/SAD		10/16		[redacted]
9.	C/SIS		10/17		Ephraim's job
10.	James Speyer		10/17		[redacted]
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.	Warning Notice Intelligence Sources or Methods Involved				[redacted]

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SUBJECT: KRONTHAL, James Speyer

[Redacted]

(b)(3)

A well written and researched case.
Concur in closing case in SAD.

[Redacted]

(b)(6)

C/SB

S E C R E T

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recently-released book Widows, written by William Corson and Joseph and Susan Trento, publishes for the first time the case of an Agency employee, James Speyer Kronthal, who committed suicide on 31 March 1953, in his Georgetown home.

Widows alleges that Kronthal was the first "KGB mole in the CIA," was a homosexual who was blackmailed by the KGB, and that the Agency may have been involved in and quickly covered up the death.

Since 8 May 1989, SAD has been investigating this incident and has determined the following:

- (b)(1) * Subject was and had been involved in homosexual activity,
(b)(3) was involved in at least one State Department originated investigation into HA [redacted] and had admitted (b)(1) [redacted] (b)(3)
 - Subject's forthcoming reinvestigation and polygraph, bouts with depression, and his inclusion on Senator Joseph McCarthy's list of subversive Agency employees, probably contributed to his suicide.
 - * There is no evidence to support the allegation that Subject was a mole for the KGB. Subject had not travelled to Germany during the period Widows alleges he was arrested for HA by the Gestapo; therefore, the penetration of the German BND by the Soviet service could not have discovered his HA and used it against him. Subject's job as an analyst [redacted] did not put (b)(1) him in contact with the Soviets. After his death, there was (b)(3) no Agency concern or investigation into his co-optation by the Soviets and no defector sources have reported his supposed misdoings.
 - * The Agency had no mechanism for dealing with the suicide of an employee in this early period. There was no "contact" in the DC Police to handle and "cover up" problems with Agency employees. The newspapers heavily reported the death and subsequent events. The case was closed by the Agency, forgotten, and the Security File destroyed in the late 1970's.
- A Security File on Subject has been reconstructed, and will be maintained in Information Management Division.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

29 September 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Special Activities Division

FROM: [redacted] Special Investigations Branch
Special Activities Division

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SUBJECT: KRONTHAL, James Speyer (U)

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1. Subject is a deceased Agency employee who committed suicide in his Georgetown home on 31 March 1953. He is the topic of the first chapter of the recent book Widows, written by William Corson [redacted] and Joseph [redacted] and Susan Trento. This book alleges that Subject, due to his homosexuality, had been co-opted by the Soviet intelligence service, and committed suicide after dining with Allen Dulles. Widows and related items in "Newsweek" and REUTERS news service allege Subject was "The Soviet's First CIA Mole." (Attachments "A&B") Current SAD interest has been to investigate these allegations to reconstruct and document Subject's file. (C)

(b)(3)

2. The attached memorandum (Attachment "C") details the initial information gathered by SAD. Subsequent memoranda (Attachment "D") detail the SAD investigation to date. Below are the allegations concerning Subject, as detailed in Widows, and the results of the SAD investigation into these allegations. ~~(C)~~

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3. Allegation #1 -- After Subject's housekeeper could not wake him, Gould Cassal [redacted] and [redacted] "from the CIA's Office of Security," arrived and discovered the body. Widows alleges that "the speed with which the Office of Security arrived at the Kronthal home adds some support" to the theory that DCI Allen Dulles may have approved an "executive action" to eliminate Subject upon finding Subject had been compromised and turned. (U)

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In fact, Cassal and [redacted] were not from the Office of Security. In a 13 June 1989 SAD interview with [redacted] (Attachment "E"), he explained that both he and Cassal had been assigned to the Office of Training. Subject was the chief of Covert Training. (S)

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WARNING NOTICE
INTELLIGENCE SOURCES
OR METHODS INVOLVED

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 [redacted]

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[redacted], also of the Office of Training, concerned when Subject did not arrive for work and was late for an important meeting, asked Cassal to go to his house and get him. Cassal's car was in the shop, so he asked [redacted] to drive. Both arrived at the home, met with the maid, and had coffee while waiting for Subject to awake. When he did not rouse, [redacted] went to Subject's room, finding the body. (C)

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4. Allegation #2 -- Subject was found by both men, "his fully clothed body lying on a daybed. His jacket was off, but he still had on a shirt and tie. An empty vial was found on the floor. The two security men followed standard procedure and called the CIA's unofficial liaison in the Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department." (U)

[redacted] stated that he alone entered the room, leaving Cassal downstairs. As he entered the room, he saw Subject in his pajamas, in bed. (A contemporary newspaper report says he was fully clothed, except for a coat) Subject had laid a linen towel lengthwise across his upper chest and was "obviously dead." On the table next to him was a little vial and an envelope addressed to Richard Helms (This is borne out in contemporary newspaper reports). [redacted] returned downstairs and informed Cassal, who called Helms (then Chief Ops). [redacted] told Helms about the suicide and asked for advice. Helms told [redacted] to call the police and he would dispatch Sheffield Edwards (then D/OS). [redacted] then called the DC police. (S)

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5. Allegation #3 -- Lt Lawrence Hartnett, head of the DC Police Homicide Squad, investigated the suicide and was an unofficial troubleshooter for the CIA, who in turn, supplied him with intelligence on local politicians. (U)

December 1983 interviews with Hartnett by William Corson, and mentioned in the 2 February 1984 letter from Robert Crowley [redacted] (Attachment "F"), Corson's co-author in The New KGB, remark that Hartnett conducted the investigation at Subject's home on 31 March 1953. This letter claims Hartnett threatened [redacted] and Cassal with arrest for searching the house prior to his arrival, thereby disturbing the crime scene. Arresting the persons you are covering up for does not appear to be the action of someone "in the know." (S)

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] remembers that it was only minutes until the police arrived. He and Cassal had returned to the kitchen table and left the scene undisturbed. When Hartnett arrived he was told Subject's name and that he worked for CIA. Hartnett did not know what the Agency was and confused it with the Civil Aviation Administration (CAA). [REDACTED] was amazed that there were no established procedures for incidents involving Agency employees. Of Hartnett, [REDACTED] remarked; "He didn't know what CIA was....My impression of the man was that he wasn't a very bright bulb." Certainly, it does not seem that Hartnett cleaned up "messes" for the Agency and covered up what they "wanted hidden," especially in light of the fact that the Washington newspapers picked up so much information about the suicide. (C)

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6. Allegation # 4 -- The DC Police retrieved two notes at Subject's home -- one to Richard Helms, one to Allen Dulles. The note to Helms remarked that Subject was "mentally upset because of pressure connected with work." Subject had mailed another note to his sister, [REDACTED] in which he confessed his homosexuality and that he worked for the Agency, not the State Department. (U)

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The WASHINGTON POST and WASHINGTON STAR articles about the suicide report that Subject left a page-long, handwritten note to "a male friend" on the bedside table indicating he was distraught due to pressure at work. (Attachment "G") No other notes were mentioned. [REDACTED] said he saw only the note to Helms. He also remarked that Cassal had told him Helms revealed the suicide note said "they're after me," supposedly indicating the polygraph and reinvestigation. In an interview with Richard Helms (Attachment "H"), he stated he never received the suicide note, but it was read to him. He further remarked that the note did not go into specific reasons for the suicide other than Subject was distressed about work. (S)

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The Crowley letter refers to the DC police report, housed at the National Records Center (NRC) in Suitland, Maryland, which refers to suicide "notes" addressed to Helms, Dulles, and Subject's sister. The DC Police state that they only store homicide reports a total of 27 years at Police Headquarters and NRC. Suicide reports are retained only a total of 10 years. At the latest, the report on Subject's death would have been kept only until late 1980. According to the police, the report on Subject's suicide no longer exists. (Attachment "I") (S)

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[redacted]

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The Crowley letter also mentions statements from Subject's sister and notes that she was the recipient of one of the suicide notes. [redacted] was very ill in 1983, and still believes the Agency arranged her brother's death. (S)

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7. Allegation #5 -- Subject was a homosexual. (U)

There is ample evidence to indicate that Subject was a homosexual or had homosexual tendencies. Subject's sister and cousin knew, according to the Crowley letter, of his tendencies from an early age. Richard Helms admitted in his conversation with ADDO/CI on 8 May 1989 that Subject was thought to be homosexual. (Attachment "J") (S)

The 1951 State Department investigation, conducted by John W. Ford, Director of Security, developed evidence that Subject was a homosexual and obtained a signed statement from another member of [redacted] who engaged in two homosexual acts with Subject. (Attachment "K") The Agency polygraphed Subject in the summer of 1951 and obtained an [redacted] from Subject. Neither the State Department investigative report nor the Agency polygraph report have survived. (S)

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8. Allegation # 6 -- The Soviets, through a penetration of the predecessor to the German BND, obtained information that Subject had been arrested by the Gestapo in the 1930's for homosexual activity. The Soviet service set Subject up and filmed him engaged in homosexual activity. From then until his death, Subject supplied the Soviets with information and the Soviets directed his actions. (U)

Subject's PHS notes that he worked for Speyer & Company as a financial analyst from October 1934 until the company's liquidation in 1938. He then taught Art History at both Harvard and Radcliffe, joining OSS in April 1942. The only travel outside the US Subject reported on his PHS during this time was pleasure travel to Italy, France, and England from June to September 1934. There is no indication that Subject had been to Germany in the time frame alleged. Neither is there any evidence to support the arrest by the Gestapo. (C)

The most damning accusation is the Subject's alleged cooperation with the Soviet intelligence service.

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 [redacted]

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Since the Agency's Security File was destroyed in the 1970's, we can only speculate as to the information it held. However, the current investigation has entailed a thorough review of some [redacted] associated security and 201 files, and not one piece of evidence has been unearthed which would add even the most remote support to the Soviet agent theory. Certainly if it cannot be proved that Subject was in Germany to be arrested by the Gestapo, the Soviet penetration of the BND had nothing to find on him. Interviews with SRS/SAG investigators and employees familiar with or contemporary to this case -- including Richard Helms, [redacted] Harlan Westrell [redacted] [redacted], and Jerry Brown -- all report that there was not the slightest suspicion that Subject was an alleged "mole." (S)

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Widows itself is even devoid of proof of a Soviet connection. The book does not present sourced, substantiated evidence of Soviet blackmail or cooperation. This is evidenced by the paucity of footnotes to the chapter and a similar lack of sourced information in the text. Subject's alleged work for the Soviets appears no more than speculation on the part of the author and just another instance of inaccuracy of the facts. (C)

9. Allegation # 7 -- Subject had dinner with DCI Allen Dulles and upon returning home, committed suicide. (U)

It is evident from the interview with [redacted] that Subject may have dined with [redacted] on the evening he killed himself. [redacted] remarked, "The book said the night this (the suicide) happened he had dinner with Dulles. I think it was [redacted] Additionally, [redacted] recalls that on telling [redacted] about the suicide, she remarked: I really don't understand. We had a date tonight. He had talked to me last night about our getting together again. There is also evidence in the [redacted] interview that Subject had fits of depression and had been depressed during the last few days of his life. (S)

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Richard Helms, in a 20 June 1989 interview with SAD, remarked that Subject was not that close to Dulles. He also said Subject was not a close enough friend to dine in the Dulles home, even though they worked together [redacted] (S)

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DCI Dulles' calendars for 31 March 1953 (Attachment "L") note no dinner or evening appointments.

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Rather, he spent the entire day at the White House Cabinet Room in a National Security Council meeting. Normally, dinners, cocktail parties, and other engagements are noted on the DCI's calendar. Becky Rant, of the Executive Registry, who reviewed the Dulles calendars for this study, noted that the 30 March 1953 page (Attachment "L") is representative of DCI Dulles' calendar showing evening appointments. (S)

The exact cause of Subject's death has never been determined, but was listed as "probable suicide." According to [redacted] an unmarked vial was found on the nightstand next to the bed. The vial was smaller than a standard pharmacist pill bottle and looked much like one [redacted] had seen pictured in OSS training material in the OTR library. [redacted] and Westrell both remarked that Subject had used an "L-tablet," the OSS suicide pill. The L-tablet and its follow on, the L-pill, were both cyanide devices meant for quick death when capture or torture were imminent. (S)

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According to OTS/[redacted] cyanide poisoning of this type is painful and will give the body a blue tint. [redacted] did not note a blue tint to the body, but a waxy look and some perspiration on the forehead. The DC Coroner's report has since been destroyed, but there is information that a blood sample was analyzed for narcotics by the FBI laboratory. (Attachment "M") Unfortunately, the Stas-Otto test done by the FBI lab does not confirm the use of cyanide, only narcotics and organic poisons. However, similar to the L-pill was the K-pill, used to "knock out" a victim. OTS believes several K-pills would have killed the Subject. Likewise, this drug would not have been found by blood test, but would have been absorbed by the stomach. (S)

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10. Of course, if the "Soviet connection" theory doesn't seem likely, there should be another motive for Subject's suicide. Based on this investigation, it appears that Subject was a homosexual who was soon to be brought into reinvestigation and polygraph in a period when homosexuals and other "sex perverts" were being removed from and denied employment. Subject was also known to have bouts with depression. Additionally, there is information in a 31 March 1953 FBI memorandum (Attachment "N") that Subject's name was on Senator Joseph McCarthy's list of subversive Agency employees.

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 [redacted]

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All of these factors may have combined, and Subject, feeling he would be ruined professionally and humiliated or persecuted publicly, committed suicide. The newspaper claim of Subject being "upset" because of problems at work would be an appropriate summation of the above events. (S)

11. The Corson Connection -- There have been allegations throughout this investigation that Corson was befriended by Allen Dulles and became an unofficial "troubleshooter" for Dulles. The attached study (Attachment "O") of William Corson, based on a review of his security file, interviews, and writings shows that it is unlikely Corson ever worked for, with, or was attached to the Agency. There is no evidence that he was an insider, and he has never made this claim. (C)

Richard Helms notes that he was a close friend of Allen Dulles, played tennis with him, and saw him on a regular basis and never heard of or saw Corson during the Dulles tenure. Helms severely criticized Corson and remarked that Corson was never an Agency employee, never affiliated with, or assigned to the Agency. He termed these allegations "nonsense." (C)

Harder to disprove is the allegation that Corson may have Allen Dulles' diary, which contains particularly damning information on this case. As the story is told, Corson received the diary from Allen M. Dulles [redacted] the son of the former DCI. The best argument against the diary theory is that Corson has never mentioned it, never used it as a footnote, or as a source. If the diary is the document Corson needs to prove his allegations in Subject's case, it seems absurd that he would not flaunt its contents in print. Mr Helms also doubts this allegation is true. (C)

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12. The Otto John Connection -- There have also been continuing allegations by Ed Sayle, UDAC, [redacted] [redacted] that Otto John was debriefed by Corson or Justin O'Donnell [redacted] and revealed to them the identity of the Subject as a penetration of the Agency. The attached memorandum (Attachment "P") reviews the O'Donnell's file and notes that he may have cooperated with Corson in a previous book. (S)

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Another memorandum (Attachment "Q") details the case of Edward Hoffer, a Army Counterintelligence Corps civilian, who committed suicide upon Otto John's defection.

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[redacted]

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There are similarities between Subject's case and Hoffer, but there is no information concerning a penetration of the Agency in either John's security file or his lengthy 201. There is no information that O'Donnell debriefed John, or was given information on a penetration. Corson's involvement in the debriefing seems unlikely, based on what is known about Corson, as detailed above. (S)

13. Final Aspects -- The information received to date on Subject essentially presents all the facts of the case. The basic information that Subject was an Agency employee was publicly admitted by the Agency after his death. [redacted]

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A 15 August 1989 interview with Bruce Solie, a former OS/SRS employee, disclosed that he had no part in this particular investigation and could add no information concerning Subject or the Agency investigation in 1953. (C)

On 26 September 1989, Sam Papich, former FBI liaison officer, was interviewed on this case (Attachment "R"). Papich stated that he reported the Subject's suicide to the FBI, however there was no indication that Subject was a "mole" or of any Soviet connection. Papich met with DCI Allen Dulles on 30 March 1953, a day before the suicide, but only as part of his normal liaison duties. (C)

[redacted] OMS, has reviewed Subject's medical file. Dr [redacted] noted that the last entries in the file were for Subject's 1952 physical. This physical recommended only dental work and glasses. There is no indication of depression or any type of psychological counselling in Subject's file, or information on Subject's subsequent suicide. (C)

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14. Based on the information gatered on Subject to date, it is recommended that no further action be taken and this case be closed in SAD. (C)

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Attachments

S E C R E T

The Christian Science Monitor _____
The New York Times _____
The Washington Post _____
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
Reuter _____
Date 12 May 1989

FIRST SOVIET MOLE IN CIA DIED AFTER DINING WITH DIRECTOR

By Michael Posner

WASHINGTON, May 12, Reuter - The Soviet Union's first mole inside the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency died under mysterious circumstances in 1953 after having dinner with then-CIA director Allen Dulles, according to a new book.

Ex-CIA operative William Corson claims in his book "Widows" to reveal for the first time the story of the first high-ranking CIA agent who was also a Soviet spy, American James Speyer Kronthal.

CIA spokeswoman Sharon Basso said "probably we won't comment on it, at least until we see the book." The book, co-authored with investigators Susan and Joseph Trento is due in U.S. bookstores later this month.

Corson, 64, a retired U.S. Marine officer who had been assigned to the CIA as an aide to Dulles, said in an interview the Soviet spy apparatus blackmailed Kronthal to spy for it after he joined the newly created CIA in 1947.

The Soviets, Corson said, had uncovered Nazi records asserting Kronthal, who came from a wealthy New York banking family and sold stolen art for Nazis before the outbreak of World War Two, was a homosexual who liked young boys.

Fearful of being exposed, Kronthal reportedly agreed to serve as a double agent to pass on information to Moscow after he was named CIA station chief in Berne, Switzerland in 1947.

Kronthal had worked for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the CIA, in Berne during World War Two under station chief Dulles, who became CIA director in 1953.

In 1952, Kronthal returned to the United States to help plan a CIA reorganization, and when that job was nearly over "his Soviet handlers told Kronthal...to press for his appointment to head the clandestine services (of the CIA)," the book said.

"Dulles so trusted Kronthal that he was prepared to give him any post he wanted," it said.

"But the pressures caused by his fear of being exposed as a homosexual and a Soviet agent were beginning to tell. Kronthal became paralyzed by his fear of exposure."

On March 31, 1953, Dulles invited Kronthal to a private dinner to find out what top CIA post he wanted, the book said.

It said no one knows what happened at that dinner but the next day, Kronthal, who had walked to his Georgetown home from Dulles' home nearby, was found dead in bed by a housekeeper and two CIA security men.

An empty vial was found near the bed, but the book said an analysis failed to divulge its ingredients.

Police called the death a suicide.

The authors said murder or suicide could not be determined.

But they speculated that if it were murder, it could have been ordered by Moscow if Kronthal's identity as a mole had been discovered or by the CIA "to send a message to the Soviets that the agency knew the man had been compromised and turned."