



BY MARIS BISHOFS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

# Tinker, Tailor, Soldier—Victim

## How the CIA Destroyed Canada's Top Counterspy

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By David Wise

**E**ARLY IN July, a representative of the government of Canada journeyed to remote southern Australia to call on a white-haired man in a modest apartment in Glenelg, a suburb of Adelaide—and to promise that Ottawa would soon issue a check to him for close to \$150,000 Canadian. Perhaps the visitor also said that Canada is sorry. He should have.

The white-haired man was Leslie James

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Bennett, the former chief of Soviet counterintelligence for the Canadian security service. The payment, which he has now received, represents final vindication and the end, at last, to a long-running Cold War horror story. For 20 years, Bennett has lived under the shadow of suspicion that he was a Soviet mole working for the KGB. The Canadian government has known for some time that the accusation is false—or it would not be paying him the money.

In the security service of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Bennett occupied a position roughly parallel to that of James J. Angleton in the CIA. There is a terrible

See MOLE, C2, Col. 1

# The Ruin of a Counterspy

MOLE, From C1

irony in this, because Angleton and the CIA were ultimately responsible for the destruction of Bennett's career and family.

Angleton, the CIA's chief of counterintelligence from 1954 to 1974, became convinced that a high-level Soviet mole was burrowing away inside the intelligence agency. His search for the mole ranged over two decades and damaged the careers of dozens of loyal CIA officers. In time, the hunt spread to other countries, to England, France, Norway, and—through Angleton's suspicions of Bennett—to Canada.

**B**ennett was born in South Wales in 1920, the son of a poor coal miner. He served in signals intelligence during and after World War II, and was sent to Australia, where he met and married his wife, Heather. He migrated to Canada in 1954.

There, he joined the Mounties and rose to become the official responsible for detecting and catching Soviet spies in Canada. Some of his operations went bad, as counterintelligence operations often do, and Bennett, a foreigner and outsider who dressed in tweeds and suede elbow patches, was not popular with the spit-and-polish Mounties in their bright red uniforms. He became an easy target.

Then, in 1961, Anatoli Golitsin, a KGB officer, defected to the CIA in Helsinki. Golitsin began telling James Angleton about moles. Like Scheherazade in "Thousand and One Nights," he rose in Angleton's esteem the more stories he told. Angleton formed his Special Investigations Group (SIG), and the mole hunt was in full cry.

One former CIA officer, who knew Bennett well and was familiar with the case, told me, "Golitsin was shown Bennett's file, or information about him, and he said, 'Yes, I think he's a Soviet agent.' That was a very powerful factor."

But so were the suspicions voiced by one of Angleton's mole hunters, Clare Edward

Petty, who had been previously credited with detecting a high-level KGB mole inside West German intelligence. Petty's reason for suspecting Bennett was convoluted: Bennett had reported to Langley that a West German intelligence officer assigned to Washington as liaison with the CIA had looked frightened during a visit to Ottawa when Bennett asked him whether he had run into a certain KGB man on a trip to South America.

The CIA put Heinz Herre, the West German, under surveillance. "A few months later, in the summer, Herre goes to Jackson Hole on vacation and two KGB guys go on the same trip," Petty said to me. In Petty's view, the KGB was trying to frame Herre by sending its officers out wherever Herre was traveling. "It was to make Herre look bad." And Bennett, Petty decided, must be part of the KGB plot. "We would not have known anything about Herre's South America trip if Bennett had not informed us," Petty said.

According to the former CIA man familiar with the episode, "The Herre incident is what triggered the Bennett case. Jim Angleton played a powerful role. He said push on, press forward. Angleton used all his devious methods to charm the Canadians with long lunches and lots of booze."

By 1970, the Mounties had launched Operation Gridiron, a full-scale investigation of Bennett. He was placed under constant surveillance; microphones were planted in his bedroom and hidden cameras were trained on his home.

The investigation quickly took a Keystone Cops turn. The Canadians, puzzled over how Bennett might be communicating with the KGB, trailed him several times from his home to a wooded area, where he removed a wire cage from his car trunk. The watchers dared not get close enough to see what Bennett was releasing from the cage, but they feared the worst: carrier pigeons! In fact, these counterintelligence sleuths were demonstrating how suspicion can mislead. The reality was that Bennett was trapping black squirrels that were ma-





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rauding in his garden and, kindly, releasing them far from home.

In 1972, frustrated by lack of evidence, the Mounties confronted Bennett, subjecting him to harsh interrogation for days. When Bennett was asked intimate details of his sexual relations with his wife, he realized his bedroom was bugged. He was locked out of his office and told he was through. Facing dismissal, the chief Canadian counterspy wrote in his diary: "My life has been destroyed. What more do they want of me? May God forgive them . . ."

The strain on Bennett's marriage was too much. Three months later, his wife left him, taking their two daughters with her to Australia.

**B**ennett also eventually moved to Australia, to Glenelg, where he eked out an existence on his small government pension. Single now, he drives to the laundromat, does his own wash and shopping and lives in a rental unit. He has managed to maintain his dignity and has tried not to become embittered. But injustice has a way of gnawing at a man.

In 1977, Canada's solicitor general told a parliamentary hearing there was "no evidence" that Bennett was anything but a loy-

al citizen. But his words did not clear Bennett.

Then on March 30 of this year, "the 5th estate," a Canadian television program, reviewed the Bennett case and revealed important new evidence. Gen. Oleg Kalugin, who had headed foreign counterintelligence for the KGB, said on the program that there indeed had been a mole in the Mounties who was paid "hundreds of thousands of dollars." The CBC program identified the mole as Gilles G. Brunet, a former Mountie, whose father had been the first director of the security service. Brunet lived beyond his means, with frequent trips to Mexico. A drawing of Acapulco and of a martini glass adorn his tombstone; Brunet died of a heart attack in 1984 at age 49. Kalugin himself stopped short of confirming that Brunet was the Soviet mole. But the name Bennett, Kalugin said, "doesn't mean anything to me."

The day after the TV program aired, Canada's present solicitor general, Doug Lewis, arose in the House of Commons and said: "I want to assure Mr. Bennett and the House that the government of Canada believes that Mr. Bennett was never a KGB mole."

Twenty-one years after his dismissal,

Bennett had finally been officially cleared by Ottawa.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the agency that took over from the Mounties in 1984, confirmed that Bennett has received his settlement. Although CSIS declined to specify the amount, Bennett indicated it was in the neighborhood of \$140,000, which will net him more than \$100,000 after taxes of 25 percent—small enough recompense for two decades as a suspected spy, and a shattered life.

**C**anada's commendable action in compensating Bennett, however belatedly, echoes the endgame of the CIA's own hunt for traitors within: Three victims of the CIA's mole hunt were compensated under an obscure act of Congress known as "The Mole Relief Act," enacted to redress the wrongs done to CIA officers whose careers were destroyed by false accusations of disloyalty. Peter Karlow, a senior officer and World War II hero, received about \$500,000, and smaller amounts went to Paul Garbler, first chief of the CIA's Moscow station, and Richard Kovich, another veteran CIA officer. The three payments together totalled about \$750,000.

The former CIA man who knew Bennett told me, "This was a Canadian tragedy. A terrible thing was done to this man. He was fired and his wife left him. His life was virtually ended at that point. He was completely innocent."

As for Bennett, dismissed after 18 years of service to Canada, he knows the lost years can never be recovered. He told Canadian television he is annoyed that his tormentors "received no formal punishment for crime against an innocent man."

As it happened, I reached Bennett by telephone on the very day he met with the government representative bearing the good news from Ottawa. He did not disguise his feelings. "I'm over the moon," he said. "It's been a long haul and it's finally been resolved. I'm very happy. Now I don't have to spend all my time trying to be cleared. It's a great relief."

So pleased was Bennett that he rustled up a big breakfast of bacon and eggs for the man from the ministry. It was the least he could do. In Glenelg, Jim Bennett doesn't get visitors that often.