

William Langer, 81; Ex-Professor Was Also a Historian of Diplomacy

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By MORRIS KAPLAN

William Leonard Langer, a leading American historian of European diplomacy, professor of history emeritus at Harvard University and an intelligence expert in Washington in World War II, died yesterday at the New England Baptist Hospital in Boston after a brief illness. He was 81 years old and lived in Cambridge.

Dr. Langer was chief of the research and analysis branch of the Office of Strategic Services, held an equivalent post in the Central Intelligence Agency and was a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. In 1946, he was awarded the Medal of Merit for "exceptionally meritorious conduct" with the O.S.S.

He was the Coolidge Professor of History at Harvard from 1936 until he retired in 1964.

Mr. Langer was the author of more than a dozen books on modern European and Middle Eastern history. In 1969, his book, "Political and Social Upheaval, 1832-1952," was published. An advance copy of his autobiography, "In and Out of the Ivory Tower," arrived at his home on the day of his death.

Ideas Caused Controversy

His 1957 presidential address to the American Historical Association caused controversy because of its suggestion that historians explore modern psychology, but his ideas gained acceptance.

"Nowadays it almost goes without saying that biography, whether literary or historical, must take modern psychology into account," he said at a conference on psychology and history at the Graduate Center of the City University in 1971.

He was an alumnus of the Boston Latin School and graduated in 1915 from Harvard, served in World War I and received his doctorate at Harvard in 1922. He took postgraduate courses at the University of Vienna and began his teaching career at Clark University in 1923. He joined the Harvard faculty in 1927.

Langer won recognition in that year with his first major work, "The Franco-Russian Alliance." He also taught and lectured in history at Columbia, the University of Chicago, Yale and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Other Publications Listed

His "Encyclopedia of World History," first published in 1940, has since appeared in six revised editions.

His publications also included "European Alliances and Alignments" (1931), "The Rise of Modern Europe" (1934), "The Diplomacy of Imperialism" (1935) and "Our Vichy Gamble" (1947).

His extended Government service began in Washington as a member of the board of analysts in the Office of the Coordinator of Information in 1941-42.

After the war, Mr. Langer returned to Harvard but continued to serve the Gov-

ernment in administrative and advisory posts. In 1945-46, he directed the C.I.A. office of intelligence research and liaison with the Department of State, and in 1946 he was a special assistant to the Secretary of State.

For the next five years he was a member of the advisory board of the National War College and from 1950 to 1952 was assistant director for national estimates with the C.I.A. At Harvard, he was di-

rector of the Russian Research Center from 1954 to 1959 and of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies from 1954 to 1956. Since 1961, he had been a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

His connections with the Government aroused some criticism of his book, "Our Vichy Gamble," although it was recognized as an important contribution. Some critics questioned his justification of the United States policy of dealing with the pro-Nazi Vichy regime and rejecting Gen. Charles de Gaulle's Free French movement.

Dr. Langer's use of classified documents for the book, undertaken at the request of Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, prompted the historian Charles A. Beard to voice alarm over what he regarded as "special favors" enjoyed by some historians.

In a letter published on Dec. 20, 1970, in The New York Times Sunday Book Review, Dr. Langer supported the historian's "right to see."

"It is preposterous that in these fast-moving times, when American citizens are constantly confronted with complex problems, the records of Government decisions and the rationale of national policies should remain shrouded in mystery," he wrote.

Shortly, however, he was "disturbed" over the publication of the Pentagon Papers, which Dr. Daniel Ellsberg said he had given to the press. And in 1972, he opposed what he regarded as the systematic declassification of World War II documents as "patently impossible."

Mr. Langer leaves his wife, the former Rowena Morse Nelson, whom he married in 1943. His first marriage, to Susanne Katherina Knauth, ended in divorce. Surviving also are two sons of his first marriage, Leonard C. R. Langer, a vice president of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, and Bertrand Walter Langer, an investment adviser in El Toro, Calif.

He also leaves a brother, Walter Charles Langer of Sarasota, Fla.; four stepchildren, Duncan, Evan and Charles Nelson and Mrs. Pier A. Abetti; 15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The funeral service will be private. A memorial service at a time to be announced will be held in the Appleton Chapel at Harvard.