

OBITUARIES

Peter Sergeyevich Deriabin Dies at 71; High-Ranking Soviet Defector of 1954

By Richard Pearson
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Peter Sergeyevich Deriabin, 71, a high-ranking Soviet defector who later worked for the Central Intelligence Agency, died Aug. 20 in Northern Virginia after a stroke.

Mr. Deriabin was a major in what became the KGB, the Soviet intelligence and security service, and was serving in Vienna as counter-intelligence chief when he defected to this country in February 1954. He was a heavily decorated combat veteran of the Red Army and former member of the elite Kremlin Guard Directorate. In 1954, he was the highest-ranking Soviet intelligence officer ever to defect.

He then worked for the CIA until retiring in 1981. A researcher and analyst, he advised the agency on history, personnel, philosophy and practices of Soviet intelligence.

A CIA spokesman once said that "the vast amount of accurate information which Mr. Deriabin provided in the area of knowledge least available to the U.S. government was of uncalculable value to the national security."

Over the years, Mr. Deriabin also did graduate work at the University of Michigan and the University of Virginia, and lectured to classes at the CIA and the Defense Intelligence College. He served as translator of the 1965 book "The Penkovskiy Papers," the memoirs of a Soviet military intelligence officer who passed highly classified material to the West before he was caught and executed after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Mr. Deriabin wrote several books, including his 1959 autobiography, "The Secret World," and "Watchdogs of Terror," a 1972 book on Soviet intelligence. He was co-author of the

1982 book "The KGB: Masters of the Soviet Union" and of "The Spy Who Saved the World: How a Soviet Colonel Changed the Course of the Cold War," which was published this year.

Mr. Deriabin was a native of Siberia and was active in communist youth groups. He was a 1938 graduate of Biysk Teachers College and was a history teacher before entering the Red Army during World War II.

He was in some of the heaviest fighting of the war, taking part in the legendary Battle of Stalingrad, in which the German army was brought to a halt for the first time in fierce house-to-house fighting. At Stalingrad, where he commanded a mortar company, his regiment entered the battle 2,800-strong and emerged with 151 men. Seriously wounded four times, he was awarded five medals and five military orders.

War's end found him in counter-intelligence work. After the war, he served with the NKVD, a predecessor agency of the KGB. He also served as one of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's bodyguards before transferring to foreign intelligence work after the dictator's death in 1953.

Mr. Deriabin later wrote of his growing dislike of the Soviet system, telling of his religious family background and how his exposure to western and early communist literature, as a trusted member of the intelligence-security elite, gradually opened his eyes.

His first wife died in the 1940s. His second marriage, to a former secretary to Lazar Kaganovich, a high-ranking Soviet official, broke up before his defection. He wrote that he thus left little in the way of family for Soviet authorities to har-

ass when he detected.

He made it out of Vienna in the best tradition of spy fiction. Disguised as "freight," he was "shipped" more than 100 miles by train through the Soviet occupation zone around Vienna. His was one of five major defections to the West that Soviet intelligence suffered in 1954.

Journalist Tom Mangold wrote in the book "Cold Warrior" that Mr. Deriabin's existence was kept a secret by the CIA for five years while he underwent extensive debriefing and later went through a process to familiarize him with the West.

Mangold reports that a CIA officer told him that the first time Mr. Deriabin saw oranges for sale he shouted to his escort, "Come and look at these oranges! Where are the guards to protect them?"

The story goes on to tell how the defector and his CIA escort traveled to Minnesota, where they met the escort's parents, and eventually to Hollywood, where Mr. Deriabin met actress Leslie Caron at a studio cafeteria. Life magazine ran a feature on the trip, which revealed to the escort's parents the real nature of his employer.

Mr. Deriabin, who lived in the Washington area, is survived by his wife and a son.