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Marcus Klingberg

A brief look at the mystery surrounding the man believed to have caused severe damage to state security by selling secrets to the Soviet Union

Ynetnews

Marcus Abraham Klingberg was born in 1918, in Poland, to an ultra-Orthodox family. In 1935 he began medical school and when World War II broke out, he fled to the Soviet Union. His family stayed in Poland and perished in the Holocaust.

Klingberg joined the Red Army during the war and spent most of his service in various medical units, where he gained substantial expertise in contagious diseases. He returned to Poland after the war and was soon married. Shortly after, the Klingbergs immigrated to Sweden. It is believed that his contacts with Soviet intelligence began around that time.

In 1949, the Klingbergs immigrated to [Israel](#). Klingberg enlisted in the Medical Corps, where he climbed the ranks to lieutenant-colonel and was named head of the preventive medicine bureau. Around that time, he renewed his contacts with Soviet intelligence and began providing his handlers with sensitive information.

In 1952, Klingberg left the IDF and joined the Israel Institute for Biological Research (IIBR). During his time with the IIBR he was its head epidemiologist, administrative director and deputy general-director. He also taught at the Tel Aviv University School of Medicine.

The ties that bind

Klingberg is believed to be one of the most high-ranking spies ever caught in Israel, and the one to have caused the most damage to state security. His contacts with Soviet, and later Russian intelligence are believed to have spanned 30 years.

His position in the IIBR – considered one of Israel's top-secret facilities – made him privy to classified intelligence pertaining to both the IIBR itself as well as to other facilities in the Israeli intelligence community. The Shin Bet questioned him, several times, but he was able to convince them he was innocent, successfully passing several polygraph tests.

In 1982, the defense establishment was able to obtain concrete evidence of Klingberg's actions. He was arrested and after a grueling investigation – confessed. By his own admission, he spent the better part of 20 years giving the Soviets a vast amount of information about Israel's progress on various chemical and biological developments.

Klingberg's true motives remain a mystery. One theory claims he was motivated by his allegiance to the communist beliefs and his old adoptive country of the USSR; another has him being blackmailed into espionage by the KGB and Soviet intelligence, which threatened to expose secrets regarding his formal training as a physician. Klingberg himself has maintained he was never paid for any information, and was motivated by ideology alone.

In 1983 Klingberg was convicted of providing a foreign country with sensitive, classified information and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He spent most of it in solitary confinement, with his incarceration kept a secret for 10 years.

In 1998, after several petitions, the State agreed to release Klingberg – whose health had seriously deteriorated – to house arrest. He was released with severe restrictions and was placed under heavy guard – for which he paid.

Marcus Klingberg's 20-years sentence ended in 2003. He left Israel for Paris, where he lives with his daughter.

[Back](#)