

Russian Tried to Cover Oswald

Bulletin Wire Services

Washington — The CIA strongly suspected that a Russian spy who defected in 1964 was a phony sent to cover up Lee Harvey Oswald's links to Soviet intelligence, according to a new book on the Kennedy assassin's life.

It claims the CIA's suspicions were effectively smothered by J. Edgar Hoover, who allegedly feared the Russian might disgrace the FBI by testifying that Oswald, in truth, had been an unwatched Soviet agent.

The allegations appear in Edward Jay Epstein's "Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald," which begins serialization in the March issue of Reader's Digest.

The Digest said Epstein, author of previous works critical of the Warren Commission's John F. Kennedy murder investigation, drew his new account from more than 10,000 pages of previously classified documents and 400 interviews with Oswald's acquaintances.

In the first installment, Epstein says the Warren

panel never questioned the purported defector — Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko — because it was under deadline pressure by the time the CIA advised it, secretly, that Nosenko might be hiding damaging information on Oswald.

Nosenko's name never appears in the Sept. 24, 1964, Warren report.

Dealing with Oswald's period as a defector to Russia from 1959 to 1962, the Warren report concludes: "There is no credible evidence that Oswald was an agent of the Soviet government."

According to Epstein, Nosenko defected to the CIA in Switzerland in January 1964, two months after Kennedy's assassination, and identified himself as the Soviet KGB intelligence officer who had handled Oswald's defector case file — Moscow's top expert on what the disgruntled ex-Marine radarman had done during his Russian sojourn and whether he fulfilled his boast to tell every military secret he knew.

The book says Nosenko stated immediately that

Spy Tie, Author Says

the KGB ignored Oswald, never even interrogated him — a practice considered routine with any defector — and told him he should go home.

This information, Epstein says, delighted Hoover, because it confirmed his assertion that Oswald was a lone crank and not a Soviet spy who bore watching.

Epstein contended the FBI seized upon Nosenko's statements to support its position that Oswald was a deranged person who acted alone in killing Kennedy.

However, James J. Angleton, former chief of the CIA's counter-intelligence section, suspected that Nosenko was not really a defector but had been sent by the Russians to deceive American intelligence officials, according to Epstein.

The theory that Nosenko was a bogus defector was conveyed privately in mid-1964 to then-Chief Justice Earl Warren by Richard Helms, who at the time was head of the CIA's covert operations division, Epstein said.



Lee Harvey Oswald

... may have been Soviet agent