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Spy Saga. Lee Harvey Oswald and U. S. Intelligence. By Philip H. Melanson. (New York: Praeger, 1990. Pp. xviii, 201. \$21.95.)

Among the controversies surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is the murky intelligence arena, that looms large in the background of the alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. Professor Melanson argues he was an operative of American intelligence.

Oswald was born in New Orleans, spent much of his youth there and in Texas, before enlisting in the Marines. Spy Saga's fundamental weaknesses first appears when Professor Melanson discusses Oswald's October 1959 defection. He asserts the covert spy Oswald passed on the secret of how high the U-2 flew in order for the CIA to establish his bona fides as a true turncoat. The Soviets then shot it down. Aside from the demands this makes on logic the factual grounding of the chapter is either lacking or wrongly interpreted. That Oswald knew the range of the U-2 is without documentary foundation. The few works cited are largely from the same school of thought as the author an always risky approach but in this subject fatal. Among the omitted pertinent studies is Michael Beschloss's impressive May Day. No question exists that the Soviets had already gotten the flying height of the U-2 and other information about it before the appearance of Oswald at the Finland Station.

After Oswald's July 1962 return he lived in New Orleans and Dallas where he was associated with incidents that seem to connect

him with the foreign adventures of the United States. The chapter on Oswald in New Orleans fails to establish intelligence credentials for Oswald, accepting many dubious statements, omitting much, and misinterpreting several points. While the author mentions that Oswald's address book listed a bar in the French Quarter across from the Customs House, he neglects to inform the reader one of the several incidents connected with the appearance of a false Oswald occurred here, a fact that a reader must have to judge his thesis. Other omitted French Quarter sites contain important information. In the LaFayette Square vicinity are many more key locations connected with Oswald than mentioned in the text, e.g., Oswald's postal sub-station box was in the same building with federal military agencies linked with Caribbean activities. He also accepts the legitimacy and quality of the Jim Garrison investigation, which is an act of faith not history as any candid and critical review of the charade would have revealed. He cites the number of CIA employees in New Orleans, but then reveals an inability to access intelligence data by counting them all as spooks when in fact one must realize the Agency had clerical staff, maintenance people, public sector analysts of dock loadings and so forth to run the office.

In his Dallas chapters we find the same pattern repeating itself. One example will illustrate the unsatisfactory nature of the treatment. For six months ending in April 1963 Oswald worked at Jagers-Chiles-Stovall on Browder Street in Dallas, a printing company. To Professor Melanson this plant was a CIA secret contract facility which among other things "did U-2 photo

analysis." In his address book Oswald had noted "micro dots," a classic device of espionage photography and further proof of spydom.

What credibility does this charge possess? Does the CIA hire workers at minimum wage to do highly technical processing of security classified material? This is impossible to conceive. Did Oswald in fact have access to any classified areas of Jagers-Chiles-Stovall? There is no reason to believe he did and absolutely no evidence. (Recall that the government can and does classify such things as city telephone books.) Did the world's most lavishly endowed intelligence agency with the world's finest photographic analysis system in its National Photographic Intelligence Center really farm out secret data to a Dallas firm which printed advertising placards? Common sense says no and no evidence exists to the contrary. Does a spy really jot down the words "micro dots" in his address book? Why? It is absurd to assume an intelligence connection.

Further difficulties present themselves. On page 82 he refers to the U-2 data as available only to security-cleared workers and cites Anthony Summers, Conspiracy (1980 edition), page 231, which so states. But Summers cites as his sole authority page 202 of the Warren Commission Hearings, vol. X, which does not contain this information. In his 1989 edition the security reference is deleted. Professor Melanson lists both editions.

Spy Saga was written in haste without the research the subject demands and cannot be recommended for an understanding of the unsolved murder of President Kennedy.

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