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## Fiction: An ex-CIA man's disputed thriller

COMPANY MAN by Joe Magglo (Putnam, \$6.95).

By George Harmon

THE late Allen Dulles, quarterback of our World War II spies and later chief of the CIA, scoffed at the notion of the American diplomat or spy being a closed-mind blunderer too cynical to play by any rules but his own. He criticized such novels as Graham Greene's "The Quiet American" and Burdick and Lederer's "The Ugly American" for promoting "mischief-creating prejudices."

Dulles wrote that he preferred "taking the raw material which we find in America — naive, home-grown, even homespun — and training such a man to be a good intelligence officer, however long the process lasts." Those homespun

boys, if we are to believe recent news accounts, are traveling much farther afield than Dulles seemed willing to send them.

THE BACKBONE of CIA activity apparently remains the clandestine listening posts and purloined letters which Dulles so loved. But now the charge is often made that the CIA tries to foment change rather than merely report it; in Uganda, for example; in Chile, in Laos.

So much is being written about the CIA, in fact, that its argot is creeping into American slang: a spy is a spook, to kill is to "terminate with extreme prejudice."

Now arrives Joe Magglo, a mercenary-turned-writer, who says he worked off and on for the CIA in places like Africa and Laos.

His novel tells of Nick Mar-

tin, a sort of comic book superhero and former Green Beret. A "home-grown" boy whom Dulles would have liked, he is recruited off a Florida campus by "the Company" (in-group slang for the CIA), and works part time, training Bay of Pigs invaders and shooting up Africa and the Tonkin Gulf. There is enough bad writing to fill three pulp magazines ("steel split the air overhead").

BUT MAGGIO'S book has an aura of authenticity about it, and few readers know enough about the CIA to dispute him — even though the question already has been raised: Is Joe Magglo the Clifford Irving of the barracks set?

W. E. Colby, executive director of the CIA, disputes the publisher's contention that "Company Man" is "a novel of facts," proclaiming it a "law-

dry fabrication" filled with " lurid writing and innate contradictions." He denies that the CIA ever has carried out assassinations or has trafficked in drugs, as Magglo asserts.

Colby also says Magglo was "terminated for cause" during a six-month CIA training program and never went overseas for the CIA or undertook any of the "assignments" Magglo says he performed. But Magglo has obtained a government letter quoting the CIA as saying that he worked for the agency on contract.

In any event, Magglo writes enough like a soldier to convince the reader he has been one. He has produced an unprofessional but good example of thriller fiction.

George Harmon is a Daily News editor and writer.