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A Secret Agent?

Did Oswald buildup oddball image to fool FBI?

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By JOHN KEPLINGER
(Last of four articles)

Views of a security expert

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Once back on American soil in mid-1962, Lee Harvey Oswald began drifting about from place to place and job to job, trailing an image of a rabble-rouser and unreformed Marxist.

After a fling at passing out "Fair Play for Cuba" literature on New Orleans street corners, he finally settled down in Dallas.

Edward Ellis Smith, former Army, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) security-intelligence officer, believes accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was a trained Soviet agent, although not acting on orders

when he shot President John F. Kennedy.

In the last of a series of exclusive articles in today's Times, Smith speculates on Oswald's espionage assignment after returning to the United States from Russia.

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He landed a job with the Texas School Book Depository, and rented a room in town, commuting to the suburbs on weekends to visit his wife and child.

Oswald was home after 2 1/2 years in Russia. How he managed his international travels so easily, returning home with a Russian bride, has opened the gates to a flood of speculation by Edward Ellis Smith.

Smith, 42, of 1849 Webster St., Palo Alto, is a former U.S. security-intelligence officer with service in the Army, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency.

In his career, he has spent several years in Moscow, speaks Russian fluently and was the first full-time State Department security officer of the American Embassy in Moscow.

TRAINED AGENT

Smith has concluded from the known facts of Oswald's life from 1959 to 1963 that the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy was a trained Soviet agent.

He does not believe, however, that the dastardly act was committed on orders of the Kremen-

Smith, who is not lacking in knowledge of undercover work, believes Oswald's assignment was routine and that it proved extremely frustrating to him. Oswald was in a hurry. He demanded action.

Smith has little doubt, either, that Oswald was mentally unbalanced, probably a schizoid personality — a type not unusual in undercover work.

Oswald went to Dallas, near the center of many space and defense installations, perhaps to "service a dead drop," Smith believes. A "dead drop" is a place — sometimes a rock, a

book on a crowded public library shelf or a post office box registered under an alias.

Other agents, perhaps working in the defense and space installations, forwarded information to the "dead drop" serviced by Oswald. He in turn passed it on elsewhere, Smith speculates.

FALSE NAME

He observes Oswald maintained a post office box in Dallas under the alias "A. Hidell." It was to "A. Hidell" and that very same post office box that

a mail-order rifle was sent from Chicago.

In order to operate without detection, Oswald had to have a "cover." According to Smith that "cover" or "legend building," as the Russians call it, began to take shape before he left the Soviet Union.

It began to take shape when Oswald wrote letters to his mother, to a conservative Texas senator and to the secretary of the Navy, expressing dissatisfaction with life in the Soviet Union and a desire to return to the place of his birth.

But once he arrived, Oswald immediately began giving the impression he was "nutty as a fruitcake . . . a rabble-rouser . . . a drifter . . . a nut." This was part of his "cover," Smith believes.

Oswald must have come under FBI scrutiny on his return in mid-1962, Smith assumes. It is possible Oswald was subject to federal prosecution for using a pretext to get out of the Marines in 1959, for passing military information to the Russians and for claiming he had never sworn allegiance to another country when he renewed his American passport in 1962.

NO PROSECUTION

All these things he did, according to Smith, but the Justice Department, headed by Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, did not prosecute.

Smith further assumes the FBI was satisfied Oswald was some kind of "nut," and did not warrant a 2-year term. However, he was not deported, much like passport holder, to an FBI agent. Six months for an interview carried the name of a lead FBI agent in his notes, Smith recalls.

Time wore on and Oswald became more and more impatient with his passive role. He grew resentful. He probably hadn't heard from his superior in a long time. He began to be ignored. He had to do something about it.

Smith says it is not unusual for undercover agents to grow impatient.

"When Oswald's impatience got the best of him, he dashed off to Mexico City. Soviet agents are taught never to contact Russian embassies or consulates in the country in which they are

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"So Oswald went to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City, even though he presumably was aware the embassy was under technical and physical surveillance.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

"He probably barged in and said, 'I'm Oswald and I want to know what's going on.' The embassy people probably replied, 'We never heard of you.'

"Angry," Smith continues, "he went next to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. He may even have attempted to obtain a visa for Cuba. It is well known there are several high-ranking Soviet intelligence people in Cuba. But, again, Oswald apparently was brought up."

Smith says, "This was the day when Oswald probably decided, 'I'll show them. I'll make them take notice of Harvey Oswald.'"

Oswald returned to Dallas. By October 22, it was officially announced that Kennedy would visit Dallas on Nov. 22. A few days before his visit, Dallas newspapers announced the route the motorcade would take.

The motorcade would go through the heart of the Texas capital city to a city where Oswald lived.

Smith traced the route of a motorcade through his rented room. He found it unexpectedly arduous, especially at the suburban home where Oswald was staying.

On the morning, Friday, he met Oswald down with a neighbor carrying a wrapped package. Smith explained contained window shades.

Four years had passed since that smoggy Los Angeles day when Lee Harvey Oswald obtained a passport as the first step in a macabre journey that ended Nov. 22, 1963, on the sixth floor of an old, red-brick building in Dallas.

As an anticlimax, Oswald was shot two days later by Jack Ruby, a Dallas nightclub operator. Oswald died with a sneer on his lips, for he had divulged nothing to police.

Smith isn't out to win any converts to his view. He offers his

interpretations of the facts for what they are — based on his special experience and knowledge.

Nor, he claims, is he out to bolster the views of the John Birch Society or any other extremist groups declaring the President was the victim of a Communist plot.

He notes a "sophisticated distinction" must be made between Oswald as a Soviet agent and Oswald the latter, frustrated, mentally unbalanced individual who, on his own, decided to take the life of the President of the United States.

Smith asks only that whatever facts, whether they coincide with his conjecture or not, the American people be given all the details.