



*The Amerasia Spy Case*, by Harvey Klehr & Ronald Radosh, © 1996 The University of North Carolina Press, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1996

Emmanuel Larsen worked at the China Desk of the ONI, writing biographical sketches.

He was hired by the ONI in October 1935 (p. 47) and left for the State Department at the end of 1944 (p. 48).

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At the end of 1944, [Emmanuel Sigurd “Jimmy”] Larsen left the ONI to take a job with the State Department. According to [Andrew] Roth, Larsen wanted to take his personality file with him, but the officer in command, a Colonel Bayles, objected: “Those aren’t your files, they’re Navy files.”

“Oh no, I brought them in with me,” Larsen protested.

“Yes,” said the colonel, “but every day you’ve been adding to them from secret documents.”

“Well that’s true,” Larsen replied. “But there’s a committee sitting on the Hill going through the causes of our being caught with our pants down at Pearl Harbor. If you don’t let me take these to the State Department I think I ought to testify to the committee about how many documents were burned in this office about warnings that came in that were never passed on.”

Larsen himself may not have realized how potent a threat this was. The ONI’s failure to predict the attack on Pearl Harbor, while highly embarrassing, had been understandable given the large volume of confusing and at times deliberately misleading traffic that crossed the analysts’ desks. But when a congressional committee began looking into the matter, the navy could

not even begin to defend itself without admitting that, as had been long rumored, the Japanese naval code had been cracked by the United States as early as 1941. Although the Japanese codes had long ago been changed, this information was still considered highly sensitive, in part because there were still isolated instances when Japanese outposts in the Pacific, lacking current code books, resorted to using the old system. The navy, therefore, was stonewalling the congressional inquiry. Larsen may or may not have known about the codes, but he realized that the last thing the department needed was for a disgruntled functionary to start talking to congressmen about a cover-up.

The exercise in blackmail worked, and Jimmy Larsen was allowed to keep his card file. He installed it in his new office at the State Department, but not before he had sold a copy of the file to Philip Jaffe.

(Philip Jaffe was the editor of the Amerasia magazine that was raided on... by the FBI and the ONI who found there over one thousand (on that day) Top Secret government and armed forces documents seemingly held as a matter of routine, that the magazine photographed, temporarily held, and at times published paraphrasing them. Espionage was never clearly proven, and Jaffe got into moderate trouble for his “obsession about spiring away and collecting Top Secret documents.” An innovating text-book bend-over-backwards-with-cartwheel sentence that looks a lot like a deal. Everyone at Amerasia was a Communist fellow-traveler and that is how Jaffe became a ‘victim of anti-Communism.’)